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European best practice projects



The projects presented in this booklet have been selected by the National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme, whose project descriptions have been used to present the individual projects. Further information on the projects is available from the National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme.

Contact information: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/yia/contact_list_en.pdf

Foreword by Ján Figel' European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth



Between 2000 and 2006, more than 100.000 projects were supported under the YOUTH programme. This programme has allowed young people to engage in youth activities such as exchanges, voluntary service and youth initiatives throughout the European Union and beyond.

Through different strands of activities offered by the programme, the young participants have developed their skills and abilities; they have discovered new cultures and increased their awareness of Europe and of being European. The projects have also contributed to promoting important values of the European Union – such as inclusion of all, solidarity, active citizenship and tolerance. With more than half a million young Europeans participating in projects, the YOUTH programme has had a huge impact not only on the young participants, but also on youth NGOs and national youth policies.

I am delighted to share with you these projects dedicated to highlighting the richness of European youth policy and the success achieved under the last YOUTH programme. The “good practice” projects that we celebrate today are each, in their unique way, wonderful examples of what can be achieved by working together towards a common objective. They have all contributed to the shaping of our common future!

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Jan Figel'". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

Table of contents

Foreword by Ján Figel' European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth	3
Table of contents	4
Austria	5
Belgium (FL)	6
Belgium (FR)	6
Cyprus	7
Czech Republic	7
Estonia	8
Finland	8
France	9
Germany	9
Hungary	10
Ireland	10
Italy	11
Latvia	12
Lithuania	13
Luxembourg	13
Malta	14
Norway	15
Poland	16
Portugal	16
Romania	17
Slovakia	17
Slovenia	18
Spain	19
Sweden	19
The Netherlands	20
Turkey	21
United Kingdom	22

AUSTRIA

Project title: “Educational Movie for Aliens: Xenophobia”

The youth work association Kiddy & Co - organised a youth exchange that involved 16 young people from Austria, Denmark, England and Poland. The participants were young people with fewer opportunities, from vastly different cultural, ethnic, religious and social backgrounds.

The aim of the project was to show the participants that despite their less privileged backgrounds they can still be heard in public. Through videos and photos they made their points of view visible. During the youth exchange, participants made

a movie to explain the phenomenon of xenophobia on earth to aliens. In order to prepare the movie, various workshops were held. The highlight of this project was the public presentation of the movie followed by a large social gathering.

Participating countries: Austria, Denmark, England, Poland.



BELGIUM (FL)

Project title: “Meisjesdromen/droommeisje (Girls’ dreams/dream girls)”

Eight girls from a Turkish community in Ghent (Belgium), discovered that writing allowed them to more easily express their feelings and realised that dreams and desires are not limited by culture, age or gender. They wrote a book, “Girls’ dreams/dream girls”, which is a mixture of creative writing, postcards, poems and pictures. The book was the product of an intensive working process and helped the girls gain awareness of their dreams and desires, personal development and emotions, thus stimulating in them a positive attitude towards the future.

Participating country: Belgium



BELGIUM (FR)

Project title: “Bien en vie, bien en vue, bien en Views”

This project aimed at creating a multicultural exchange between visually impaired, blind and poor-sighted young Europeans. It focused on the personal development of participants, intercultural learning and brought together young people from different backgrounds through various activities.

The theme and activities were the result of brainstorming sessions and online discussions. The main theme was “personal development”. For that, a vast series of group activities were carried out, such as

informal linguistic courses, dance workshops and sports activities.

Through this exchange the visually impaired had the opportunity to experience all the activities in a multicultural environment, encouraging their sense of solidarity, autonomy and expression. They were able to share those experiences with young people with and without visual disabilities.

Participating countries: Belgium (Fr), Poland, Slovenia, UK, France, Spain, Italy and Romania

CYPRUS

Project title: “Fight of Exclusion”

There is a large Greek-Pontiak community in the Cypriot town of Paphos, and other nationalities are also represented, like Arab, Turkish Cypriot, Russian etc. Conflicts related to exclusion and racism occur. This project brought together young people from these communities and created activities and working groups for discussions, excursions and dance and music classes. It also provided facilities for the young people to read books, play sports, use computers and eat together. Furthermore, campaigns were started in order to inform the local community of these activities, and how the young people were working together for a better future.

Participating country: Cyprus



CZECH REPUBLIC

Project title: “Deaf Youth Culture”

This project involved groups of deaf young people from the Czech Republic and Great Britain. It aimed at comparing the living conditions and educational opportunities of deaf young people in the Czech Republic and in Great Britain and at exploring differences between British and Czech sign languages. The project also focused on developing participants’ independence and organisational skills and on fostering intercultural learning by comparing ways of life in Britain and the Czech Republic.

The most important activity for intercultural learning and personal development was the workshop on British and Czech sign language. A discussion on differences between the way of life for deaf people in the Czech Republic and Great Britain was also highly appreciated. Through a pantomime workshop, the participants identified the barriers and stereotypes concerning deaf people in society.

Participating countries: Czech Republic, Great Britain



ESTONIA

Project title: “Dancing in the Darkness”

A group of four Estonian young people with visual disabilities felt the need to bring their peers with similar problems together to provide them with an opportunity to expand their social activities. Their project, Dancing in Darkness, was based on two main topics: equal opportunities and social inclusion. The main activities of the project were weekly lessons of different dances (line, ballroom, pilates and folk). About 30 blind young people participated in these sessions on a regular basis. The main goals of the Estonian project were to gain experience of teamwork, to create a network of social assistance in Estonia and to

improve self-confidence of visually impaired people. That was achieved by offering dance courses and the chance to get acquainted through body movement.

Participating country: Estonia



FINLAND

Project title: “Love, Peace and Respect”

This youth exchange involved two groups of young people from Imatra (Finland) and London (UK). The main aim of this project was to promote tolerance among young people and eradicate extreme prejudices against individuals of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Through activities like workshops on drumming and drama, the Finnish participants had the chance to learn about the everyday life of young people in London and to compare the challenges and problems of their respective surroundings.

Participating countries: Finland, United Kingdom



FRANCE

Project title: “Regard de l’Autre” or “Under the others’ eyes”

This project involved young men and women from France, Italy and Morocco in a reflection on the issue of gender equality. Some of the topics of their discussions included respect for tradition, the diverging development of young men and women in Europe and Mediterranean countries, provocative behaviour and violence against women, the importance of family history and women’s political rights. The results of their discussions, reflections and analysis were presented through a film and an exhibition.



Participating countries: France, Italy, Morocco

GERMANY

Project title: “Gender mainstreaming – Together towards a European Future”

This multilateral youth exchange was targeted at young men and women from socially less privileged backgrounds – young people in the transitional phase between school and career. The main goal of this project was to stimulate a change of mindset among the young participants when confronted with gender issues. During the exchange, participants discussed the different realities of their countries on the basis of their experiences. The traditional roles of church and family were analysed and national groups prepared role-playing exercises to show scenes of everyday life in their countries. The EU Gender Equality Directive and its implementation in EU countries was also discussed. Activities and discussions in working groups produced a vast series of results, such as a rap song, a video on the typical behaviour of couples, campaign posters and photos.

Participating countries: Austria, Ireland, Malta, Germany

HUNGARY

Project title: “Actions for Equal Opportunities – an International Development Adventure Camp for Youth with Williams Syndrome”

For the first time ever, young people with Williams Syndrome (WS) from all over Europe came together to form an integrated development project to increase the chance of equal opportunities for disabled youth.

As Williams Syndrome is a rare condition, occurring in approximately 1 in 20.000 births, it is relatively unknown, and people affected by this syndrome have inadequate health and social care. Therefore, to decrease marginalisation for sufferers, it is very important to make it possible for them to advance their independence and promote social integration.

More than 200 participants took part in various programmes, to extend perceptions of limits and abilities, and to create an „I can do it“ feeling among all of them. The activities included music workshops, drama classes, dance and art therapy as well as musical gymnastic and special swimming lessons. At the final talent show, the teams presented their songs and dances on stage.

Participating countries: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden (and observing experts from Romania and Greece)

IRELAND

Project title: “Embracing Inclusion”

„Cairde“ is an organisation working with asylum seekers and refugees who are rurally isolated and socially excluded in northwest Ireland. It works through the arts to broaden the participants’ horizons and build

their capacity for personal development. The young people working on this film project were a very diverse group. It was a therapeutic process for them to consider their experiences. The young people were



very committed to the project and worked hard on its success. They produced an anti-racism film to show in schools, youth clubs, youth

groups and community groups. The film highlights the problems that people face when they come up against exclusion, discrimination, racism and prejudice. Fourteen young people participated in workshops over a nine-month period. The group included two young asylum seekers from Sudan as well as young people who had for one reason or another experienced exclusion from Irish society.

They learnt the skills to make and edit the film and developed networking skills while participating in a range of workshops on subjects such as inter-culturalism, conflict resolution, digital technology, web design, European integration, editing, sound production and drama.

Participating country: Ireland

ITALY

Project title: “Free Raid”

The general idea of this multilateral exchange was to make a raid on the fields of personal identity, culture and cultural heritage. In total, 33 young people, mostly with fewer opportunities and social-cultural disadvantages, were involved in various activities related to gastronomy, music, dance and daily life. The general aim of these activities was to create a multi-ethnic festival to show the results of the time spent together with the support of the local community. The sense of belonging to the group was stimulated by building a totem, a huge sculpture made by all the participants that became the symbol of the community.

Participating countries: Italy, Germany, Czech Republic and Hungary

LATVIA

Project title: “Art is understanding”



Fifteen young people took part in the project “Art is understanding” that was promoted by the „Reflection“ youth group in cooperation with the non-governmental organisation „Child of Care“, from Riga. The main idea of the project was to form a music band composed of young people with mental disabilities.

During the first part of the project, regular music lessons and rehearsals taught participants how to play different musical instruments and how to sing. They learned lyrics and stage skills. Different methods were used to teach young people how to play musical instruments more effectively. For instance, they learned songs and melodies through associations with colours. During

the second part of the project, the band performed at four concerts. All participants were actively involved in the entire project. From the very beginning, they chose the musical instruments they wanted to play, the songs they wanted to perform, the locations of their concerts. They also came up with the band name „Spark of the Star“ and organised their concerts.

As a follow-up to the project, Spark of the Star will participate in music festivals in Latvia and travel to Turkey to participate in the international song festival NEXT. They also plan to enter the Eurovision song contest for people with mental disabilities in 2008.

Participating country: Latvia

LITHUANIA

Project title: “We don’t know the languages, but want to communicate”



This project was a bilateral youth exchange between Lithuanian and Turkish youth groups. The theme of the project is explained by its title: “We don’t know the languages, but we want to communicate.”

The challenge was for young people from very different cultures and countries to find a way to communicate. Participants worked together on several important topics mainly by expressing themselves through choreography, sport activities, art, theatre and games. The project helped these young people, mainly from multicultural and from disadvantaged backgrounds, to gain

common experiences, to develop personal skills and to discover cultural similarities and differences.

Participating countries: Lithuania and Turkey



LUXEMBOURG

Project title: “Théâtre d’intégration (Mixtro)”



Before starting her career, Julie completed a voluntary service in Spain within an organisation working with disabled young people and children. Back home after this enriching experience, she felt the need to repeat it and took the initiative to establish a theatre project with young people, including some with mental disabilities.

Julie believes that setting up such a project was the best method of integrating young people with special needs and to end their isolation.

Participating country: Luxembourg



MALTA

Project title: “Arts and Living”

A group of young people forming part of the Don Bosco Voluntary Service wanted to make a memorable summer for the boys in care at the St Patrick’s Home. The project involved the organisation of a schedule of activities to provide the children with a life as normal as possible while at the same time compensating for some of their disadvantages. Hence provision was made for their physical, emotional, educational, spiritual and developmental needs through a variety of activities that appealed to their sense of ‘fun’ while providing experiential learning. Apart from that, the project aimed at reuniting the boys in care with their siblings in other institutions and together they could participate in the activities organised.

The children were given the opportunity to take part in plenty of activities organised by the young project promoters.

The project also aimed at making the kids feel special, hence various artists from the musical scene in Malta were invited to meet the kids and perform for them while the kids were given the time to ask questions. The project was then concluded with an open evening for family and friends of the boys who were invited to take a look at what they had done during those 90 days of activities. A CD with the information on each of the activities performed was launched, which was then distributed to other institutions of care to generate similar projects.

Participating country: Malta

NORWAY

Project title: “Abraço”

Abraço (meaning embracing) was a project for youth from minority backgrounds, which brought together break dancers, MCs, R&B musicians and DJs to set a great youth celebration in Oslo. This way the young people art scene of Oslo and Norway was empowered. Young people who had never travelled out of Paris were invited, as were youth from England and Sweden.

The purpose of the project was to create an arena where young people with artistic ambitions could meet, develop ideas together and show their work. The on-site sessions started with different workshops on dance, rap, studio recording, and song writing. The workshops were assisted by professional musicians, producers, lawyers dealing with copyright issues and film producers.

One of the important results of the project was the exposure of the theme of “Europe of today and tomorrow – a common European youth identity”. Through music and dance performances the youth identity was made visible to the public. A big outdoor stage was set up in the local community one week after the workshop started. Every day between 1pm - 5pm, the outcomes of the workshops were presented to the general public, including people of different ages and backgrounds. In the evenings, local professional clubs presented dance and music performances.

Participating countries: Norway, Sweden, France, England



POLAND

Project title: “Youth from big cities. Sport against violence.”

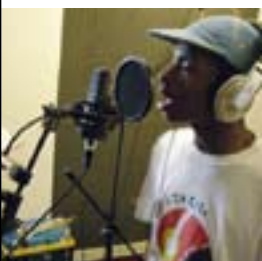
The purpose of the exchange was the meeting of two youth communities from Hungary and Poland with less opportunities and similar experiences. The programme of the exchange consisted of presentations, evenings where national culture was presented, meetings with representatives of local institutions, excursions and rugby games. Both groups were involved in educational sport activities, namely rugby.

Meetings took place between clubs that were created by young people and that work with neglected youth. The Polish side introduced a project realised in Nowa Huta called „rugby in the neighbourhood“. It aimed at engaging a group of young people from a disadvantaged neighbourhood in playing rugby.

Participating countries: Poland, Hungary

PORTUGAL

Project title: “Putos Qui À Ta Cria (Children Growing Up)”



The objective of this project was to encourage young rappers to use their music as a vehicle for the promotion of the fight against discrimination, prejudice and violence. By contributing to the promotion of dialogue and cooperation between young people from different neighbourhoods the project was a way of working together and creating good things rather than conflict and violence. A CD and a DVD with rap music, completely conceived by the participants were recorded finally. The young people organised a youth festival dedicated to the realisation that another world was possible for young people with difficulties. The festival featured dance, gymnastics, fashion and rap music. Fifteen less privileged neighbourhoods of Lisbon were represented at the event. During the work on the CD and DVD they also had the chance to experience working with Internet tools. Another result was a TV interview and distribution of sound tracks on the internet.

Participating country: Portugal

ROMANIA

Project title: “Networking for promotion of NGO resources”

The main goal of this project was to facilitate the cooperation of NGOs from Romania, Ukraine, Slovakia and Moldova and to foster the exchange of experiences and good practice. Sixty participants could develop their personal skills and qualifications. The project focused on strengthening youth initiatives supported by European programmes like the Youth Programme, fundraising and the establishment and management of non-profit associations and structures. The

project also aimed at facilitating the development of long-term partnerships between NGOs as well as the exchange of experiences, know-how and volunteers. As a result of the project, three youth forums were opened. Through this, they could discuss themes like intercultural learning, international work teams and possibilities offered by the Youth Programme.

Participating countries: Romania, Ukraine, Moldova, Slovakia



SLOVAKIA

Project title: “Ester – targeting racism and xenophobia through art”

This networking project aimed at producing a theatre performance using Old Testament motifs while exploring themes such as „Jewishness“ (religion, history, traditions and customs). In the preparation phase the project also included young people with fewer opportunities, and involved mentally disabled people in art and music therapy workshops. The project also covered many topics discussed by European society and sought to present many views and aimed at creating greater under-

standing of topics such as intolerance and discrimination. The project was advertised on a local TV channel, and the outcomes were made available in a multimedia CD, distributed in schools and institutions.

Participating countries: Slovakia, Czech Republic





SLOVENIA

Project title: “Velika evropska igra (Great European Game)”

The project Great European Game was the idea of nine young people who wanted to promote Europe among children and youth in an interesting and funny way. They all liked games and knew how powerful they can be as educational tools. So they decided to combine their knowledge about games, Europe and how to work with children.

The objectives of the project were to create 10 different games about Europe in which at least 400 children and young people could participate. A website was created and a book about the game was published.

The Great European Game is an informal educational tool in which the players are actively involved in the creation of the game.

They actually take the role of pieces used in board games and act, for example, as citizens of different European countries, as the countries themselves, or as institutions and markets. The game is called “Great” because of its scale and its need to be played in open spaces such as playgrounds, parks or urban areas.

The project was a great success. More than 1.000 children and youth attended the Great European Game and were part of the event. At the end of the project, more than 80 young people had been involved in the project’s preparation and implementation. The group received invitations from several different organisations to present the Great European Game in the future.

Participating country: Slovenia



SPAIN

Project title: “EVS, an achievement for young people with a mental disability”

This project is based on a video that tells about mentally disabled youngsters, who did a short term European Voluntary Service (EVS). Initiated by a mentally disabled volunteer himself, it aims at overcoming prejudices and stereotypes about mentally disabled people. The documentary shows that the YOUTH programme is also accessible to young people with fewer opportunities. The video was shown on Spanish TV and in public places like schools and youth clubs.

Participating country: Spain

SWEDEN

Project title: “The Great Outdoors”

This project involved a short-term volunteer activity in the form of a work camp in Malvern, UK. Twenty-three young people from Europe participated through the short-term EVS scheme. The chosen volunteer from Sweden, Caroline, has Down’s syndrome and hasn’t, until now, had many chances to participate in international activities. The work camp included activities related to environment and personal development through an outdoor teaching approach. The host organisation (The Great Outdoors) organised this project with the aim of offering young people with fewer opportunities a meaningful and rewarding experience. The project is aimed at equipping the volunteers with

the confidence and self-belief to participate in the wider programme whilst also achieving worthwhile environmental improvement in an area of protected landscape. By working with a large group of volunteers from as many countries as possible, the „European“ value of the experience is increased, and volunteers have the chance to support each other and benefit from the group atmosphere.

Participating countries: United Kingdom, Sweden, Iceland, Poland, Italy, Lithuania, Austria, Germany, France, Spain, and international volunteers from Thailand and Brazil



THE NETHERLANDS

Project title: “Power of choice”

The idea of this project was that youths who had already participated in other exchanges served as group leaders, so that the ‘experienced’ young people were the peer educators for the ‘inexperienced’ participants. It was an exchange by youth for youth. The exchange consisted of four parts: training, exchange, outdoor experiences and a closing session. During the training the tools of leadership and methods of learning were taught. Throughout the exchange all participants prepared workshops on subjects connected to the themes. This way intercultural learning and an implementation of the new tools was experienced. The outdoor part of the project included raft building, canoeing and biking. In the closing session the participants evaluated all their activities and arranged a follow up exchange.

The central objectives of the exchange were social inclusion, equality, personal development, European awareness and seeing beyond preconceptions. All of these topics were constantly part of the learning process for the participants.

Participating countries: Bulgaria, Lithuania, Slovakia, Malta, Netherlands, Finland, Romania



TURKEY

Project title: “Eclipse hunters”

Young Turkish and Polish amateur astronomers came together to observe the total solar eclipse in Side, Turkey. They worked together to be able to understand each other by eliminating all their prejudices. Acceptance and tolerance were the priority in this project inspired by Yuri Gagarin, the first man to orbit the Earth. The main aim was to witness the brief three-minute eclipse. Around this event, the teams organised many different workshops to teach astronomical observations; web-cam astronomy; networking and popularising astronomy; telescope and binocular usage; and astrophotography.

Participants built a webpage to promote the project, and the forums were used for participants to get to know each other in advance. Fifteen thousand flyers and solar viewers were distributed to make people aware of the danger of observing the eclipse without protection. Also, a seminar for primary school children was organised in Elmali. The project had a great impact on the children, who had never before seen foreign people before. The teams gained an opportunity to eat Turkish food in the tradi-

tional way in the Elmali pavilion and discovered the Turkish way of life in the village.



Participating countries: Poland and Turkey



UNITED KINGDOM

Project title: “Carnivalisation”

In this project young people expressed themselves through artistic work that demonstrated their cultural traditions. It was inspired by the way different cultures, communities and nationalities celebrate and use arts and culture as a means of social intervention. It was also a way of celebrating the diversity of cultural heritage to be found within minority communities in both Latin America and Europe. This exchange aimed to develop the participants’ skills through collaborative intercultural activities with professional arts facilitators and in peer group training sessions. The participants gained new knowledge, skills and experience of ‘cultural production’ through the medium of carnival arts (dance, music and carnival costume making), resulting in a large-scale multicultural community-based celebration developed by the young participants. The majority of the young participants within this project came from less privileged backgrounds – areas of high unemployment and social deprivation. Many had not had the opportunity to be involved in collaborative international work. Many project participants were from racial minority groups within their own national contexts.

Participating countries: Brazil, Uruguay, United Kingdom, Italy and Portugal

