

Introduction

youthNET project "Creative Partnerships with SEE" aims to enrich the whole European community with fresh projects and transformation of knowledge from north to south and from east to west. "Tolerance Through Local Participation", as one of the three project sub-groups, is the base for building new projects with main idea to foster the participation and tolerance in different local realities in participating countries.

Aims of the event

The first meeting of "Tolerance Through Local Participation" sub-group were:

- building up inter-ethnic regional sub-project group
- developing common understanding of key notions (such as tolerance, active participation)
- collecting ideas for future sub-project(s)
- setting cornerstones for the future of sub-project(s)

Methodology

Following the very name of the sub-group, as well as main principles of the youthNET as such, we have used inclusive and interactive group-work methods and methodologies, implying high perception of self-responsibility of every participant. It was a combination of short theoretical inputs and practical exercises, that aimed to activate participants and use their previous knowledge and experiences to highest possible extent. Concretely, we were using non-formal learning techniques, such as brainstormings, buzz-groups, small groups and plenary discussions, games, presentations, in a very pleasant and creative atmosphere, near the Ohrid lake.

Participants

There were 33 participants, coming from Germany, Poland, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Kosovo, Albania, Greece, Macedonia and Hungary. Variety of their background and previous experiences was an added value to the meeting and a useful resource for the group itself.

Day by day...

Wednesday, June 13th

This was the arrival day, so there were only evening, after-dinner activities. These were *getting-to-know-each-other-activities*. The exercises were very intensive and effective.

Thursday, June 14th

We started the day with some *name games* and *further getting to know each other*. After the *welcome word*, given by Ms. Aleksandra Vidanovic, Executive Director of BCYF – the hosting and coordinating organization for this particular sub-group, we presented the *program, aims of the meeting, methodology that are going to be used* and the group agreed on the *ground rules* to be respected during the meeting.

This was followed by listing out participants' *expectations, concerns and contributions* in regard with the meeting:

- Participants stated that they will consider this meeting successful if: they get new ideas, we exchange experiences, find common goals to fulfil, come out with some
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good project that will influence a lot of young people, learn new things and – some more concrete answers – the group manages to submit a proposal for the November 1st deadline (European Commission's "Youth in Action" Program) and network is established among the youthNET participants, as well as outside the very youthNET.

- They were concerned to go home disappointed in case: they don't get new ideas, contacts, challenges, a strong and reliable network of partners, team spirit and a clear future perspective for the activities to be undertaken.
- Contributions participants were ready to put in were: creative ideas, support to positive thinking, sharing information and experiences, constructive criticizing, paying attention to the others and the ground rules.

The next part of this day was devoted to *team building activities*, in order for participants to get more familiar with each other and to build the trustful atmosphere for their future joint work. The process was gradually led from individual to team work. At the beginning, the participants were walking around the room, each one on their own, trying to feel the space and people around. Exercises in pairs followed, build trustful relationships between the participants. Plenary team building activity, as the last level of the process, was a rope game, when the participants had to act as a team and faced with all the advantages and disadvantage of team work.

This was followed by a debriefing, and some of participants' findings and comments were related to what is crucial for a successful team work (might be used as guidelines for their future joint work):

- thorough preparation work
- communication within a team
- clear structure within a team (division of roles and responsibilities)
- having a good planning and strategy
- innovative and creative approach
- tolerance and paying attention to each other – inclusiveness, involvement
- following the process and readiness to improvise if needed
- trust and mutual support
- experience, credibility
- motivation
- taking care of the wider context i.e. outer circumstances

After lunch sessions started with *presentations of participating organizations*, with an emphasis of their activities in concern with tolerance and local participation. The idea was for the participants to see "who is in the room" and what resources for their future joint initiatives they, as a group, have.

The final session of this first working day was meant for the *fine tuning* in terms of developing common understanding of the key notions that figure in the title of this sub-group and are supposed to be the core of their future projects. Therefore, after a brainstorming on "tolerance" and "local participation", participants were divided into two smaller groups and asked to develop definitions of these to notions, based on the phrases they previously brainstormed.

The outcomes were:

- Tolerance means respecting differences (identity, culture, opinion, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, rights...) and human rights, to strengthen humanity.
- Local participation is an open-minded participation, through contributing and promoting a decision making process, by giving and getting with respect.

Activities planned for this day were meant to tackle issues of *what an idea is, what are the attributes of the good idea*, as well as introducing *key concepts of project management*. An idea was defined as a visualization of change, whereas a visualization is a precise and clear description on how the change will be achieved and change is an improvement of present situation in the life of an individual or society which is achieved through planned activities.

With this frame set, we did a brainstorming in two small groups in order to list out as many ideas of the future projects as possible. Afterwards, these ideas were voted for and we came out with the five ones to be further developed in five working groups (participants themselves have joined particular groups, depending on how much did they like each of the ideas and found they could contribute to it).

First step for each of the five group was to estimate their idea concerning the listed attributes of a good idea:

- realistic/ achievable/ possible to realize
- understandable
- with a clear goal
- unique/ innovative/ bringing in something new
- useful
- interesting
- concrete
- creative
- inducing the change

Then we went deeper into *project management* issues, assessing and shaping each of the ideas by reflecting upon the following:

- what is the project?
- what can contribute for a project to be successfully realized? (What made the best project you've done/participated in your life to be the best?) & What can spoil the project in its realization? (What made the worst project experience in you life to be the worst?) & How can we apply these findings in our future work?

Best project experience	Worst project experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - team work/spirit - coordination - dependability - learning by doing/capacity building - reliability - involvement of participants - increasing participants' interests - clear output(s) - effectiveness - different points of view - awareness raising - visibility - attractiveness - sharing of responsibilities - sharing of good practices - exchange of experience - good leadership - communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of responsibility - communication gap - lack of experiences - unreliable partners - poor management - bad or no planning - dysfunctional team - lack of motivation - miss-match between project proposal and implementation - to high goals - indifference - prejudices - intercultural misunderstandings - no legal framework - inadequate methodologies

- vision and mission statement
- values that form the core of the project – we agreed on the following, that should be taken care of when developing future projects within youthNET: active

participation, inclusion, mobility, tolerance, sharing experiences, innovativeness, life-long learning, equal opportunities, key competences, creativity, non-formal and in-formal education/ learning.

- SWOT analysis – as a general tool and particularly in regards with concrete project ideas (participants analyzed their ideas briefly)
- project cycle and phases – including: needs assessment, development of the idea, mapping the resources, making the activity plan, project implementation, monitoring, evaluation, as well as concrete skills and knowledge we have to have in order to successfully complete each of the phases.
- setting the project goals, objectives and concrete activities – introducing the SMART model (goal and objective should be S-specific, M-measurable, A-achievable, R-realistic, T-time-bounded) and the progressiveness transforming goals into objectives and objectives into concrete activities

Thus, during the first part of the day, participants were led by trainers through all the aforementioned items; then, they had the whole afternoon to develop their project ideas, in their working groups.

The outcomes of this process were presented after dinner. There we had the five ideas shaped up, to be transformed into concrete and detailed project proposals. Each of the groups had to present their idea briefly, by answering to the crucial questions: *what* is it they want to do, *why* – for what aim, *where*, *for whom* – a target group, *who* is going to be into the implementing team (partner countries/ organization), *how* – some ideas for concrete activities and *when*:

1. WHOSE SONG IS THIS?

- what: a multilateral exchange on raising awareness about common roots of different nations
- why: to promote tolerance
- where: Bulgaria, Plovdiv
- for whom: young people age 18-25 /indirect local people
- who: Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Austria, Hungary, Kosovo
- how: application 1 November 2007
- when: summer 2008

2. LEARN A JOB

- what: training course for local authorities and youth leaders
- why: to make youth more visible in the society, to point out the needs of youngsters
- where: Macedonia, Pretor
- for whom: youth leaders form SEE and EU (approximately 25 participants, aged 18-30)
- who: Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia, Macedonia, open for other partners
- how: sharing best practices, simulation of project writing, training in project management
- when: July 2008

3. INCLUSION THROUGH ADVENTURE AND SPORTS

- what: a youth exchange
- why: to get to know yours and other cultures, accept them and promote understanding and tolerance
- where: in one of the participating countries, outdoor
- for whom: 3 participants + 1 youth leader per country, aged 18-22
- who: Serbia, Albania, Macedonia

→ how: trainings in the morning (team building, discrimination, prejudices, networking, non-formal education, human rights); outdoor activities in the afternoon (canoeing, rafting, hiking...); intercultural activities (each of the participating countries would host one day and present their customs, cuisine, cultural heritage etc.)

→ when: summer of 2008, for one week

4. SMALL SUMMER UNIVERSITY

→ what: a non-formal summer university

→ why: to help youngsters gain new skills, knowledge, friends during the summer vacation

→ where: Greece

→ for whom: young people from all over Europe

→ who: Greece, Germany

→ how: trainings in different topics

→ when: summer of 2008

5. FESTIVAL OF YOUTH THEATRE

→ what: caravan, a multilateral youth exchange

→ why: to promote tolerance and values of multiculturalism and stimulate youngsters to express themselves through arts

→ where: travelling through several European countries

→ for whom: youngsters from participating countries

→ who: Poland, Kosovo, open for more partners

→ how: making thematic and relevant theatre plays, workshops, intercultural activities, travelling throughout Europe and including youngsters from other countries

→ when: summer of 2009

Saturday, June 16th

Participants were introduced with the application form for European Commission's "Youth in Action" Program. Trainers have presented the main parts of the Action 3.1 application form – as youthNET encounters both EU and non-EU countries, joint actions are eligible only within Action 3.1.

Some items that were estimated by trainers as possibly challenging in the application form were went through, using the "silent floor discussion" method: the questions were written down on the flip-chart papers, and participants were asked to go around and write down their comments, advices, questions so they can be visible for everybody:

1. HOW TO ACTIVELY INVOLVE PARTICIPANTS IN EACH OF THE PROJECT PHASES:

→ by having preparatory activities

→ proper selection of activities (non-formal and informal learning methods, theoretical inputs)

→ preliminary selection of motivated participants (pre-selection on the basis of the application form)

→ by properly identifying participants' needs

→ providing space for giving and receiving feedback

→ distribution of information among the members of local communities

→ follow-up activities, organizing non-formal network

→ by dividing tasks and duties

→ transparency in all phases

→ giving equal opportunities

→ involving everyone in every activity/ step of the project

2. EU DIMENSION OF THE PROJECT:

- human rights, democracy, respect for other countries
- EU citizenship
- involvement of different countries
- equal opportunities which actually is the priority of EC
- making strong relations between EU and non-EU countries
- EU enlargement
- fighting against xenophobia

3. DISSEMINATION OF THE RESULTS:

- publication on web pages of partners: materials, feedback, presentation of the sources, success stories
- invisible effects: participants will distribute and implement acquired knowledge and skills in their local communities
- capacity building
- promotion through media – cooperation with national TV and radio stations to disseminate the project results
- promoting the results via existing European networks (e.g. EURODESK, SALTO, UNITED etc.)
- peer education – multiplier effects
- small local actions in partner countries
- establishing the network between the partners
- using the Active Citizens Program for establishing twinning between cities
- motivation of local authorities to support youth organizations
- promote the results

4. EXPECTED IMPACT ON THE PARTICIPANTS AND LOCAL COMMUNITY:

- multiculturalism (knowing and sharing experiences)
- increasing the appreciation of own cultural values through learning about other cultures and vice versa.
- better cooperation and relation with other European countries
- young people become more active
- local authorities are more sensitive for youth needs
- acceptance and knowledge of EU values
- providing new opportunities, skills and knowledge to participants
- providing opportunities for international and regional cooperation
- increasing the capacity of vulnerable groups of the society
- rising awareness of importance of active participation

5. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- common understanding of relevant concepts
 - mutual cooperation
 - tolerance
 - knowing and accepting others
 - strengthening the cooperation among different young people
 - improving the capacity of people from rural areas
 - identifying common roots
 - promotion of differences in positive way
 - promotion of pluralism
 - enhancing knowledge about our own identity
 - being more sensitive for each other's needs
 - fostering motivation
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- teaching the young to be more determined in realization of their ideas and expressing their needs in their local communities
- trained leaders to support the work of youth organization
- identifying the common needs and problems
- identifying possible solutions
- motivating the members of vulnerable groups to actively participate in the society

Trainers have also shared some "tips and tricks" on how to fill in the application form and the participants were also asked to do so in plenary. Afterwards, they were given some time for further development of their ideas i.e. putting them in the form of project proposals.

After the lunch we had an *evaluation* of the event. It comprised several steps:

1. LIST OF NEEDS FOR FUTURE TRAININGS – the next step within "Creative Partnerships" project is capacity building for participating organizations, which is going to happen in autumn 2007. Therefore, participants were asked to list out all the possible topics for trainings they find might be useful and interesting for them:

- project management
- leadership skills (ToT for youth leaders)
- communication skills
- team work
- financial management for "Youth in Action" projects
- fundraising skills
- advocacy/ lobbying
- intercultural dialogue
- conflict management and mediation
- negotiation skills
- European citizenship

2. EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRES

The questionnaire comprised 6 questions, out of which some were open for participants to formulate their answers themselves, whilst some were multiple-choice ones. We are now going to give an overview on participants comments on each of the proposed questions:

a) *What you find is the greatest benefit of this event for your future work within youthNET?*

- concerning partnerships and networking: meeting our partners and getting to know each other; new partners; new contacts; team building; establishing good network; strong network; we all realized importance of good communication between us; inter-regional cooperation; team spirit.
 - concerning key notions: common understanding; explanation of words idea and active participation.
 - concerning ideas: developing ideas; setting concrete objectives.
 - concerning further steps: delegation of tasks and roles for the future; planning future projects together.
 - other: exchange of experiences; learning a lot of new things.
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b) *To what extent did this event contribute to:*

	average grade (1=min, 5=max)
→ Building up inter-ethnic regional sub-project group	3.95
→ Developing common understanding of key notions (such as tolerance, active participation)	3.95
→ Collecting ideas for future sub-project(s)	4.19
→ Developing sub-project idea(s), using the Youth in Action application form	3.81
→ Setting cornerstones for the future of sub-project(s)	3.90

c) *How much are you satisfied with your own contribution and level of participation during this event?*

- I gave my best; I believe that every participant (including me) contributed a lot – as much as they could; 80% satisfied; grade 4; I'm pretty much satisfied; I'm totally satisfied; There was enough space for everything; I contributed to the greatest extent.
- Given that I had little to no preparation, it was quite good; Actually, I didn't think that I'll have that much opportunity to contribute, but I think I did well.
- Not much, because of language barrier; It depended on the session, but in general, I think I could do better; It always could be better; I couldn't be as active as I would like to, because I'm new member of my organization; Not much – I wanted to participate more, but... ; I can give more personal experience to the people that start now; Next time it will be for sure more; I was a little bit inactive.

d) *To what extent have this event met your expectations in regard with:*

	average grade (1=min, 5=max)
→ Fulfilling of the set goals of the meeting	3.81
→ Work of facilitators	4.00
→ Working methodology/ concrete activities	3.95
→ Logistics	4.19

e) *What could have been different/ better during this event?*

- The meeting was a little bit repetitive comparing it to the start-up event.
- More structured free-time.
- I thought we will decide (all of us) to develop one joint project.
- Being more strict when it comes to respecting time (participants could have arrived on time, not skipping the sessions)
- More practical things, that you cannot find in a user guide.
- More lectures – academic lessons.
- More free time.
- More team building activities.
- To last longer than just 4 days.
- Make it clear who is arriving later and introduce them when they come, and who stays for which days, who is just coming and going all around...
- Trainers could've been more flexible in certain situations – you need to lead and direct the group, according to its interests and needs and mood-sometimes things do not work as they are described in books.
- Logistics: food, internet could work.
- Nothing: you have done this very good; everything was ok; I'm satisfied with everything.

f) *Any further comments:*

- Because of this event, I'm looking forward to participate again!
- For the next meeting, we need to set clear and concrete ideas and content, that would differ from the ones of the first two meetings.
- It would be great if it is possible to have next meetings in other cities, so we can get introduced with local work there.
- Hope that all these people will remain in the youthNET, so we cooperate in the future.
- Everything was great, thank you! ☺

3. WHICH OBJECT SYMBOLISES HOW DO I SEE MYSELF WITHIN youthNET IN THE FUTURE? Some of the answers were:

- blank paper: it's up to us to fill it in, we'll see what will happen
- key: people use keys to open door, break barriers
- marathon runner: we still have a long road in front of us...
- lake: large space to fill in and to jump in and swim
- glasses: would like to take a closer and deeper look into the youthNET
- sunglasses: I hope we'll have a lot of work to do, so that I don't have time to use my sun glasses

Formal part of the event was closed with a group activity, when we said "good work" to each other, in the circle.

What followed was a surprise afternoon – boat excursion and beach farewell party.

Sunday, June 17th

This was the departure day. No activities took place on this day.

Submitted by:

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Appendix: List of participants

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