



YOUTH IN ACTION PROGRAMME

Focus on:

# Young people and entrepreneurship

*European  
good practice  
projects*



Youth in Action  
Programme

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**Androulla Vassiliou**  
*Commissioner for Education, Culture,  
Multilingualism and Youth*



# Foreword

**T**he European Union promotes entrepreneurship as a key competence that can boost competitiveness and growth. It has highlighted the importance of advancing a European entrepreneurial culture by fostering the right mind-set and entrepreneurship-related skills in the Europe 2020 strategy. As a result, entrepreneurship education is now being increasingly encouraged across Europe.

Encouraging entrepreneurship is particularly important to face challenges related to alarmingly high youth unemployment rates in most of the EU Member States. Entrepreneurship and self-employment offer pathways for young people to emerge from unemployment. In this context, special attention is paid to the social entrepreneurship model, which is embedded in the real economy, close to people and to local communities, and primarily aimed at contributing to the general good of society.

The European Union's commitment to growth and jobs is not just about boosting major infrastructure investment, promoting exports or improving the business environment. The EU vision is much broader, embracing the development of human potential. For the sake of its own citizens, as well as if it wants to stay competitive, Europe needs to invest in people, in their skills, in their ability to adapt and in their ability to innovate. The challenges of modern society can be met only when its members develop a sense of what it is to be an active, critical and responsible citizen of Europe, and when they

are equipped to make the best choices for themselves in a constantly changing world.

To achieve this, there is a need to encourage young people, to instil a spirit of entrepreneurship from early on in life — initiative, confidence, calculated risk-taking, creativity, organisation, tenacity — and to help them in the transition from school to adulthood. This booklet demonstrates some of the wide range of pioneering projects in Youth in Action programme that nurture the development of such entrepreneurial skills.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Vassiliou', with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

**Androulla Vassiliou**  
*Commissioner for Education, Culture,  
Multilingualism and Youth*

# Pioneering practice in young people's learning about entrepreneurship

**Y**oung people creating a local theatre or a school magazine, or running activities for young refugees, are giving real meaning to the concept of entrepreneurial learning. The projects in this booklet illustrate the benefits of stimulating young people and providing them with the tools, resources or environment to put their ideas into effect.

Personal development requires the ability to set personal goals, and the know-how to attain them. This is what entrepreneurial learning for young people is all about. Alongside finding out how to start a business, they acquire practical skills and positive attitudes: greater awareness of society, a sharpened appetite for active engagement, new competences and confidence to play a part.

Formal qualifications do not always help young people when it comes to solving problems, rising to challenges, assessing opportunities or taking risks. Even managing a small project can be a real achievement for someone who has never before faced such a challenge. And opportunities for networking can open the eyes of young people who lack a wide range of contacts or the possibility to compare their situation with others.

This is the rationale behind the projects outlined in this booklet.

A sense of initiative and entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports individuals in their everyday lives at home and in society, and in the workplace. It alerts them to the context they operate in, and makes them more ready to seize opportunities.

Entrepreneurship depends on:

- \* knowledge, including the ability to identify opportunities for personal, professional and/or business activities;
- \* skills, in proactive project management (planning, organisation, leading and delegating, analysis, communication, evaluation and recording), representation and negotiation, and working as an individual and in teams;
- \* attitude, characterised by initiative, independence and innovation in personal and social life, as much as at work, and motivation and determination to meet objectives.

Some of them recount how creating an app at school, compiling video profiles or making a cross-border movie helped develop creativity and innovation, and in several cases the skills and confidence acquired led to the setting up of companies or to self-employment.

Some of the projects focus on giving new chances to younger people with fewer opportunities, by involving them in entrepreneurial activities where they acquire confidence in themselves through non-formal learning.

Other projects are focused on upskilling youth workers, exploring social entrepreneurship models or on building bridges with professionals in education, local authorities or the business community.

Success can be measured by how many successful businesses participants subsequently set up, or how many of them found jobs. But what counts even more is the extent to which the young people acquired those abilities and attitudes that help them to take charge of their own lives, to influence their own futures and to play an active role as citizens of Europe.

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## Bouncing back from early school-leaving to help others

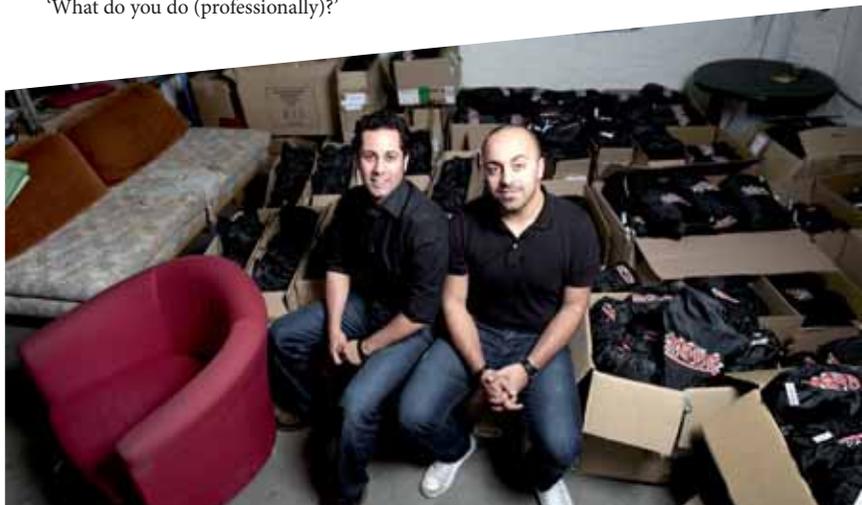
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**Leaving school at 14** is not the easiest start to a career. A group of young men in Vienna — some who were early school leavers, some with Iranian and Russian backgrounds, some who were daunted by the world of work and did not know what profession to choose — created a video project to help other young people find their way from school to employment. They knew how big the challenge can be.

Whatchado <sup>(1)</sup>— the network for occupational orientation (<http://www.whatchado.net>) — has been functioning in Vienna since September 2011. The group designed and created an online platform carrying interviews with people working in a wide range of occupations, providing an informal career view offered by manual workers and television presenters, apprentices and accountants, craftsmen and musicians — and even the president of Austria.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Whatchado — an American English abbreviation, enquiring 'What do you do (professionally)?'





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Austria.

Project carried out by Whatchado — Netzwerk für Berufsorientierung, Austria.

To provide a framework for the project, the young men initially set up a non-profit association. They selected interview subjects, made contact with companies and public organisations and requested interviews with employees. They then conducted and shot the videos themselves, asking questions about interviewees' daily working routine, what they liked and disliked, and their education. The resulting series of five-minute videos provides young people with a realistic insight into the working environment and helps them think about their own choices on education and career.

The team promoted the platform at career information days and fairs for young people. They also liaised with schools and young people on the sort of information that they would like to see in interviews. An accompanying online questionnaire helps users to match job profiles with their personal interests, and a search engine directs them to interviews with people in relevant occupations. The project has proved a great success — for young people exploring the world of work, and also for the young people who ran the project. The target of generating 500 interviews by 2013 was already reached in 2012. There are now plans to develop related apps, to offer the service in other languages and to make further links with private companies. It has also led to two of the founders of the initiative turning the association into a business start-up in early 2012 with investor backing: this offers online video-based profiling services for private business, and has three full-time and nine part-time employees. This won a 'social impact award' from the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, and was chosen as one of the 50 top start-ups in 2011. The Youth Initiative project ran from September 2011 to May 2012 in Vienna. ■

'Today there are so many different jobs and it is not easy for youngsters to decide what kind of job they want to do and how to get there. I know, because it took me a long time to find myself too.'

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## Fashioning a future through youth initiatives

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Alongside the 2012 ‘Bilbao International Art & Fashion’ competition for young designers, Bilboost, an online platform, was set up to encourage innovation among young creators around Europe and beyond. It benefits from the fact that the competition had 36 finalists from 13 countries, selected from 826 contestants of 47 nationalities. The platform uses ICT to promote young people’s access to creative forms of self-expression, and to offer links to top designers, which reinforce their relationships with the world of work and their sense of entrepreneurship. But it also promotes intercultural dialogue and awareness of social issues, since the project is run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) using fashion to tackle youth unemployment, racism and post-conflict dialogue.

This multimedia tool is available in English and Spanish, and includes social media with a monthly newsletter. The platform is public, but individual users can obtain passwords allowing them to access video competitions and virtual galleries where designers can show their work and make themselves known. It contains a guide for young entrepreneurs in the fields of art and fashion, and it has run a ‘design a communication’ campaign, inviting young people to enter art and fashion contests. Young people interested in arts and fashion across Europe can enjoy the many-faceted virtual communication. The ability to make contact with each other not only promotes understanding among people from different backgrounds, but can also give new cross-border impetus to fashion trends and ideas, and generate



Project funded by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels, Belgium.  
Project carried out by the Asociación Cultural Roda, Spain; Fashion Awareness Direct, United Kingdom; Associazione Moda e Modi, Italy; CityArts, Ireland.



interest from international fashion companies. At the same time, it develops the social aspect of the fashion industry and helps young designers to compete on equal terms using new technologies.

Setting up the project involved the identification of good practices and successful methodologies for creating virtual tools for young people, and testing and adapting the tools to the needs of users. Preparatory transnational meetings were held in Ireland, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom, along with a series of regional seminars. This made it possible to collect information, analyse needs, design tools and recruit participants. Constant communication about the project was a central element — and a report on results was delivered at the end of the project.

After 18 months, 1 300 European young people were using Bilboost, demonstrating the merits of promoting media literacy and e-youth work. This has fostered entrepreneurial spirit and developed skills among young people, and strengthened relationships in the art world between young creators and acclaimed designers. It also involved schools and NGOs in the exchange of learning and experience.

The project took place from December 2009 to the end of May 2011 in Dublin, Getxo (Spain), London and Milan. The participants were mainly 16- to 25-year-old fashion designers, stylists, graphic designers, architects, managers, trainers, teachers, students in art schools and unemployed young people. ■

**‘Being present on this platform has changed my career as a designer by offering me a shop window where I can display my work.’**

**‘It’s about ideas. You don’t have to present a huge saleable collection, but just show your creativity.’**

**‘This has made it possible for me to dream, and to start my professional career through new technology.’**

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## Creating cultural links across the Dniester

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**When Luka went to Comrat** in Moldova for a six-month stint as a European Voluntary Service volunteer, he found that the art and culture project he was assigned to was not fully ready. But instead of going back to his scouting organisation in Slovenia, he decided to stay anyway, and to design a project himself. Within weeks he had identified needs among local people, and in response he created a series of activities around the theme of awareness of Europe.

Some of his programme offered new skills. Since English is little known in Comrat, he organised an English club, and together with a local American, provided a course of informal English lessons for young people, introducing games and other non-formal methods to make them confident in using the language. When he realised that young people had difficulty in using computers, he organised a course in touch-typing in the Cyrillic alphabet.





A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Slovenia. Project carried out by Združenje slovenskih katoliških skavtinj in skavtov, Slovenia; International Committee of Citizen Diplomacy, Moldova.



Other elements broadened his contacts with local people. He explained the scouting movement, which is virtually unknown in Moldova, and made several presentations on scouting activities. And he cooperated with other local projects, including a photo exhibition, a film club, an art competition focused on women's issues and round tables about Europe and the European Union.

One of his activities there had a major impact on his life. He studied the techniques used in building traditional Gagauzian houses, in which natural materials such as straw bales and clay offer good insulation properties, and helped build one — which was of particular interest to him as a student of engineering. On his return to university, at the end of his European Voluntary Service project, he decided to focus his diploma paper on these techniques. As a result, he is now employed as a construction site manager in a Slovenian company specialised in natural building.

While he was there, Luka not only developed his own sense of social entrepreneurship; he also learned some technical skills — including speaking and writing Russian — and improved his English. And he widened his cultural awareness, learning that people in Moldova treasure what is largely taken for granted in the EU: health, peace, prosperity, rule of law, and human and civil rights. He developed great affection for Moldova, but also a new sense of the importance of the values of the EU and a pride in being European.

The project ran from February to August 2010, and was hosted by the International Committee of Citizen Diplomacy, a Moldavian non-governmental organisation working to support the non-governmental sector in Transnistria. ■

**'With the European Voluntary Service, something new comes into town. Everywhere people welcomed me with open arms, and I will never forget our endless debates about culture, economics and politics.'**

**'The European Voluntary Service was a great experience in my life. You get to meet new people, learn foreign languages, understand other cultures and ways of life.'**



## A factory for social entrepreneurship

**Social enterprises** offer a valuable model for youth work. How to set them up was the focus of a seminar for 24 youth workers that took place in July 2011, with participants from the EU and Eastern Europe. The starting point was that social entrepreneurship offers a double advantage: it can help sustain many NGOs struggling with financial issues as grants get harder to find, and it offers some innovative ways of introducing young people to the world of work, and even of creating employment.

Youth workers from Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Sweden and Ukraine explored the topic as an opportunity for youth work. They discussed how to develop the abilities of people working with youth — particularly with young people from ethnic minorities — and how to make young people more competitive in the labour market. The seminar did not suggest that social entrepreneurship is a universal model for the trouble-free work of a youth organisation, but it did identify where opportunities exist, how they can be seized with imagination and initiative, and what skills are most useful in exploiting





A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Estonia. Project carried out by Mis? Kus?Millal? MTÜ, Estonia; Daugavpils 10. Vidusskola, Latvia; JUBUK Verein zur Pflege jüdischer Bildung und Kultur e.V., Germany; Helsingin Venäjänkielinen Nuorisokulttuuriryhdistys Alliance ry, Finland; Ryska riksförbundet i Sverige, Sweden; Agency for Non-Formal Learning, Russia; 'Ukraine-XXI', Ukraine; 'Apriori', Moldova; 'Fialta' NGO, Belarus; 'Abkhazeti' (CHCA), Georgia; Volunteer Service of Velikiy Novgorod, Russia; Slavic Youth Organisation, Lithuania.



the opportunities. The seminar employed the methods of non-formal teaching, encouraging the exchange of experience from different countries to alert the participants to opportunities they had not been aware of, along with theoretical and practical exercises, and simulations of entrepreneurship challenges.

There was agreement on the need to develop the competences of people working with youth, so that they were better equipped to build links between youth work and social enterprises. The participants acquired new capacities for counselling, and for supporting the creation and development of Youth Factories of Social Entrepreneurship in their own countries as part of Youth in Action, so that social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills would be promoted among young people.

This five-day seminar took place in Nelijärve, Estonia, in July 2011, and was run by the NGO Mis? Kus?Millal? It was one component of a four-month project entitled 'Youth factory of social entrepreneurship: jobs, enterprise and society', which aims at increasing the employment chances of young people from ethnic minorities. ■

'Social entrepreneurship is very interesting, and this way young people can develop their skills and get new knowledge that is really useful for them as well as for the organisation.'

'This is a very good tool to solve the social problems of vulnerable populations through income-generating activities.'

'With participants from youth organisations that are social enterprises, non-commercial organisations, and commercial organisations engaged in business related to social issues, we collected experiences reflecting different national approaches to social entrepreneurship and created a general concept of how we can use social entrepreneurship as a method of working with young people.'



## The art of youth engagement

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**Young people's participation** in cultural life and the arts was the focus of a three-day event in Dublin in March 2010. The 60 young delegates, aged between 15 and 25, were all enthusiastic and determined to be involved in arts and culture policies.

Delegates came from across Ireland, from a wide range of different backgrounds. The event featured arts-based workshops and discussions, aided by professional artists, initially in small interactive groups that allowed the participants to take ownership of the process and express their own ideas. The discussions were then extended to include representatives of cultural institutions, relevant government departments and other agencies. In this broader forum, and using music, theatre, dance, film and the visual arts, the young participants explored engagement in cultural life and the arts, and expressed their own concerns and ideas.





The event had echoes across the country. Schools and youth groups were encouraged to hold related discussions and activities. A young arts collective ran a dedicated website as a forum for ideas, with an online record of the event. And a screening of films by young people was organised.

In addition to the dialogue that was generated at the event itself, there were other immediate effects, with the Irish Arts Council inviting youth representatives to take part in discussions of resource allocation for youth activities, and numerous invitations from other organisations to make presentations on the initiative. Since then, some of the young participants have organised a follow-up youth-led meeting to build on the ideas generated and to broaden their reach to more young people. ■

**‘This gave me a chance to speak about these issues... and I got to try new things I would not have gotten to try anywhere else.’**

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## Making movies — and making movie companies

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**Ten French and Spanish young adults** made a short film, in a cooperation between non-governmental organisations that work with film in the two countries. They worked together in creating the script, preparing and then supervising the shooting, and in the post-production phase. Across such a wide range of tasks, close coordination was vital. Success was achieved by excellent communication and teamwork: everybody knew what they had to do at any particular time, and they took the responsibility for doing it.

The story recounts how a man driving aimlessly across a physical and cultural desert gives a lift to a hitchhiker and becomes involved in a journey that provides him at last with a sense of identity. Every element was carefully integrated, from looking for actors to renting the furniture and finding the sets and locations. The preparations involved extensive discussions between different members of the team to establish every shot, how it should be made and what was needed for it. Prior to shooting, rehearsals took place with the actors, and the technical and artistic teams were taken to visit





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in France.

Project carried out by Le Grenier Du Shanak, France; Filmephilos, Spain; La Casquette Productions, France (<http://www.lacasquette.fr>).



the locations — and all the last-minute administrative problems were dealt with. Once the film was actually shot, the group organised all the subsequent technical stages of the movie — editing images and sound, creating and recording the music and harmonising the colours.

Major obstacles had to be overcome to keep the project on track, mainly because the group was a non-profit organisation. The team eventually overcame the difficulties by creating their own production company, La Casquette Productions, which has subsequently worked with French cities and institutions on movies, including Mémorial de la Résistance et de la Déportation for Saint-Etienne.

The Seul à Seul project ran from September 2011 to March 2012, and took place in Paris and in Tabernas, Spain. The six French and four Spanish participants were all in the 25–30 age range. ■

‘Everyone brought their own vision and artistic sensibility to the teamwork and this made the project a success.’

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## Finding a place for herself by helping others

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**People can find their own place** in the world through helping others — as in the case of a young immigrant girl in Belgium. She was one of a group of young people who set up a Youth Initiative project in Antwerp.

The focus of the initiative was young people in residential care, who are frequently cut off from the activities that many their age take for granted. This can reinforce their sense of exclusion and limit their possibilities for realising their full potential. The risk was averted for some care-home residents in the city of Antwerp after this Youth Initiative project started to offer meaningful and enjoyable leisure-time activities.

The group went to listen to what the youngsters in residential care would like to do with their free time. The result was a series of organised activities such as cycling tours, trips to amusement parks and the seaside, and craft afternoons. Every weekend and every holiday period there was something new as a cultural, creative or sporting opportunity, providing the chance for contact with new ideas and new people, and overcoming boredom and the limitations of pocket money. The activities eventually extended to young people in several care-homes across Antwerp. For the young organisers, the project gave them the chance to learn new things themselves — about planning and execution, about teamwork, about communication and about overcoming obstacles and rising to challenges.





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the Flemish-speaking community of Belgium.  
Project carried out by Wingerdbloei vzw, Belgium.

The young immigrant girl who was one of the organisers of the initiative had dropped out of school because she was confronted with racism, and had come to feel out of place and lacked confidence. She was attracted to this project because although she had never worked with other young people or done any extracurricular activities, the focus on welfare for vulnerable children was something she could sympathise with, based on her own personal experience as an immigrant.

Subsequently, other opportunities opened up for her. She went to the Netherlands to give a presentation about the project and to exchange experiences. She moved on to doing work related to women in society and the opportunities for women from ethnic minorities.

She became a youth ambassador for the Antwerp European Youth Capital and part of a project on equal opportunities. Since then she has resumed studying, with a focus on social work. She is also a participant in a 'living library' project which aims at constructing a pact in Flanders between young people, policymakers and society at large for youth policy in 2020. Ideas have been submitted by 5 500 people, and she presented the results at an EU youth summit in May 2011.

Project Bijzonder gewoon Tsjell ('extraordinary natural chill') run in Antwerp, Belgium, for 13 months from April 2008. ■

**'Youth in Action projects gave me a new confidence and a new sense of engagement. I felt I was really learning. I felt a sense of commitment I had never felt at school. I discovered not only what I like to do, but also what I can do.'**

**'As a 17-year-old, I did not have many interests and I was studying something I never wanted to study. I was treated like a child that was incapable of achieving anything. I could not stand the unfair treatment, including from some of the teachers, so I did not feel good about myself or my life. I shut myself off completely and saw no future for myself.'**

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## Get inspired!

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**Offering inspiration** from collaboration among the three distinct fields of non-formal education, business and formal education was the ambition of this week-long project in Poland. Representatives of the three sectors came together for a rare sharing of comparisons and exchanges. The seminar was a conscious attempt to build bridges between sectors and learn from each other's philosophy, approaches and experiences.

The 25 participants from 12 countries included youth leaders experienced in implementing Youth in Action projects, particularly projects with a strong entrepreneurial impact, and youth workers from organisations developing entrepreneurial skills among young people. There were also academic and business specialists in formal entrepreneurial education and representatives of public institutions.

This project's starting point was that a formal educational background and vocational experience are nowadays not enough for finding one's place in the labour market. More is needed: entrepreneurial competences gained through non-formal education such as the ability to plan and manage projects, adapt to changes, deal with risk and solve problems. Widening the understanding of entrepreneurship in different countries helped to identify factors and resources





that can help young people in taking initiatives and showing entrepreneurialism. The programme also explored Youth in Action activities as a catalyst for developing the entrepreneurial competences of young people.

Participants were encouraged to seek a common vision and understanding of what was meant by entrepreneurial education, building on profiles they provided of successful entrepreneurs from their own countries. The seminar examined what makes an entrepreneur, and what are the attributes, in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, that entrepreneurial learning should promote. As a creative element in the programme, participants formed groups and then produced their own versions of the tools, resources and methods that could best support youth entrepreneurship education.

One session explored building cooperation with companies and identifying the kind of support (financial, knowledge, voluntary service of employees, etc.) that a company can provide. One participating NGO obtained a contract to provide counselling services to an international bank as a result of the seminar.

The seminar took place on 19–24 April 2012 in Konstancin-Jeziorna, Poland. The participants came from Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and the United Kingdom. ■

**‘I’ve learnt new tools and methods about youth entrepreneurship education and useful skills.’**

**‘I learnt a lot of the theory behind entrepreneurship education and this really helped me to understand it.’**

**‘It inspired me a lot and gave me the chance to meet professionals and businesses that our NGO could work with.’**



## Cycles of self-improvement

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**More people can get around the Croatian town of Novska on a bicycle, thanks to this project.** But just as importantly, the young people involved in the project have been able to develop their creativity and entrepreneurship, and to find ways of giving practical expression to an engagement in environmental protection.

The central activity of the project consisted of 19 young people collecting old and broken bicycles, repairing them and putting them back into use for tourists and for local citizens. The reconditioned bicycles were offered for rental — at very low rates — at the busiest places in town, and the revenue generated was ploughed back into keeping the project going. Deals were negotiated with cafes at the rental locations, where the rental money would be taken. The bicycles were also distinctively decorated in workshop sessions, to give the project even higher visibility.

The project, which ran throughout the second half of 2011, was initiated by members of a youth cycling club who also wanted to promote cycling for health and ecological reasons. They started by recruiting local young people and agreeing with them on the objectives of the project. Together they planned how to carry it out and they allocated the tasks and responsibilities to make it work. First, promotional materials were designed and produced. These were then distributed to the public, to explain the





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Croatia.

Project carried out by Novi svijet — gradska udruga zabrigu o djeci I mladima, Croatia.

project and its purposes. Further publicity was generated through social media and local radio. Cycling events were organised and the project was presented at local schools. Open workshops on basic bike repair were held. In response, local people donated unwanted bikes.

The group could then start restoring and decorating the bikes, and buying the necessary tools and parts. The youngsters involved developed new mechanical skills. But many of the associated activities also boosted their creativity and sense of entrepreneurship. They acquired a better sense of organisation and teamwork. They learnt how to deal with finance and to cooperate with different institutions. And by making presentations on the project's objectives — and subsequently on its outcomes — they extended their communication capacities. They expanded their own environmental awareness and concern for health, and because several of the youngsters involved were from disadvantaged backgrounds and living in care, the project provided new experiences in solidarity among young people. Overall, the group had the novel experience of taking responsibility for what they were doing, as active citizens, bringing change and improvement to their local community.

Some of the citizens of Novska have become more physically active too, and have also acquired greater awareness about preventive actions to protect the environment. ■

'This was a great experience where we learned a bit of everything — from marketing and entrepreneurship through to solidarity and tolerance.'

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## Finding new skills in a new country

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**Young people from a Sudanese community** in Kilkenny — part of an international resettlement programme — worked with Irish teenagers to create a two-week ‘culture club’ for primary-school age children in the city. The aim was to explore and expand the views of young people on cultural diversity. The club helped to promote different cultures and to counter racism and discrimination.

The 60 primary-school children who attended were a mix of Irish, Nigerian, Polish and Sudanese. They were engaged in games and workshops on dancing and drumming, on sport and storytelling, and on making masks and cooking food — activities that allowed them to explore different cultures. The focus was on the individuals’ uniqueness and social skills. Alongside, some of the activities introduced European topics, to raise awareness of European citizenship and of the children’s place in Europe.

The project gave the teenagers a chance to display their own talents. They were involved in designing, preparing and delivering the activities. And each of them took a role in planning the activities, obtaining equipment and supplies,





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Ireland.

Project carried out by Ossory Youth, Ireland.

ensuring health and safety, promoting and advertising the project, or project evaluation. Daily reviews with all of them meant they could express their views, offer suggestions for improvement and discuss and resolve issues as they arose. By being part of the club, they also became better known locally, and they acquired a greater understanding of cultural norms and new knowledge about other cultures.

Not only did they make a real contribution to local life, but they also helped more widely in spreading the ideas and values of a multicultural society and tolerance. They also enjoyed working together and gained valuable experience along the way, developing leadership skills, taking on responsibility and working in partnership with adults to achieve set goals. They gained confidence and self-esteem, made new relationships and friends, and even became positive role models for younger children. All of them completed a full week of youth leadership training at the start of the project. At the end of it, they created a 'toolkit' of practical advice that could benefit other young people considering setting up a similar initiative in their own community.

The project took place in the second half of 2009, in Kilkenny city, Ireland. The 16 teenagers from Sudan and 11 from Kilkenny had already been working together as mentors to a youth group under an international integration programme. ■

**'The success of the adult–youth partnership on this project was the key to the young leaders achieving their goals. A youth-led project like Culture Club brought many people together within their new communities and helped the integration progress.'**

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## Moving from idea to action

28

**‘From idea to action’** was a five-day training course that helped guide 20 young people in turning their entrepreneurial ideas into action plans. Each of the participants already had an idea about a project: a vegan cafe for young unemployed people, an NGO to advise people with fewer opportunities about setting up a business, an association to develop cultural events, a volunteer-based theatre group for disadvantaged children, etc. The trainers used non-formal techniques to give the participants the tools to develop their projects, and the course provided a platform for support, networking, cooperation and sharing of ideas.

The programme included case studies, visits to projects and evaluation. Reflection on their projects led to improvements in their planning and to clearer ideas about what to expect, and what to do and who to ask when difficulties arise.

They learnt about business planning, marketing and visibility, and business analysis, financing and funding. The course gave them the space, resources and links to test their ideas, practise new skills, obtain feedback and to implement their projects in cooperation with others. And they could experience techniques new to them in self-directed learning and peer-to-peer work. The participants also practised and improved their





A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Spain.

presentation skills in general, and — since they came from Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom — they developed their ability to do so in a foreign language. Through working together in groups they learnt the value of mutual support.

They discovered ways to progress their projects and how to find the right match between their own ideas and the frameworks available for support — such as the options in the Youth in Action programme, social entrepreneurship, or structures such as NGOs and associations.

The team of trainers included both non-formal and business trainers, who together provided a comprehensive view of what is needed to make an entrepreneurial project happen. By the end of the course, the participants had a clear view of the steps needed to translate their ideas into reality.

The course took place in Madrid, in May 2012. The four trainers were themselves part of a Youth in Action ‘Training of trainers’ course. ■

**‘Bridging the worlds of business and non-formal learning is challenging, because they do not immediately understand one another. But it provides real potential for the future, in developing young and creative people who also have the necessary skills and tools for entrepreneurship.’**

**‘I learned a lot about entrepreneurship and had the chance to explore how to move from idea to action.’**

**‘For us as trainers it was very challenging, working together for the first time and bringing our own experiences and backgrounds from different countries, and combining non-formal education with the business field.’**

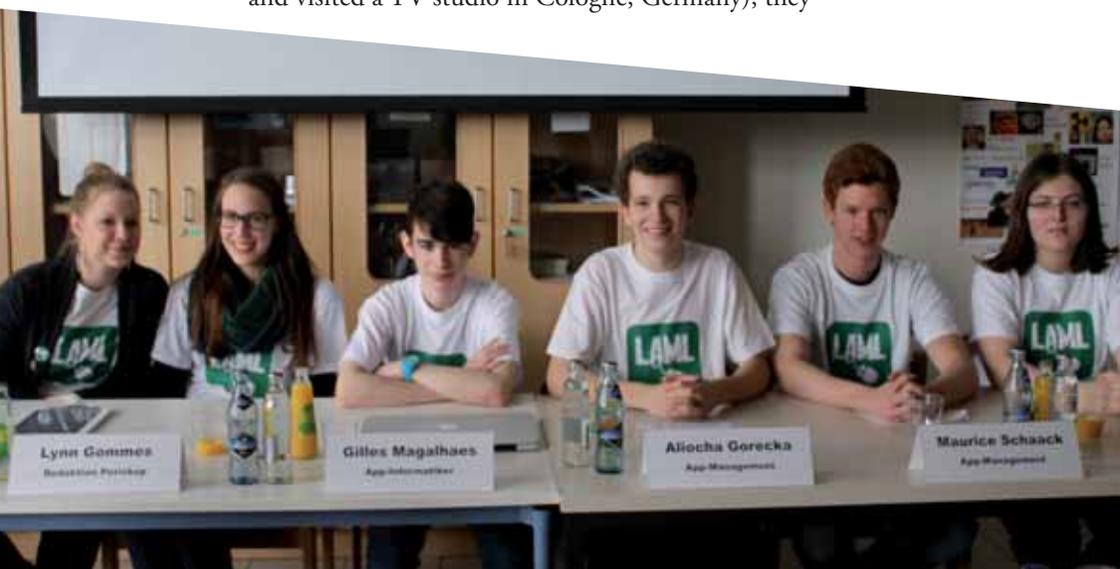


## Bringing school magazines into the Internet age

30

**Pupils at a secondary school** in Luxembourg decided that their school magazine could be updated to take advantage of the Internet age. Outside school hours, and through non-formal learning, they developed an app which not only carries the customary magazine articles, but also provides up-to-date information about the school — such as news about what’s going on, which teachers are absent or the day’s menu in the school canteen. It also provides photographs of events organised by the school.

Their motto was ‘no adults’. The entire project was created and managed by the group of young people themselves during their free time. They set up their own working groups on techniques, content and management. They carried out the technical development of the app, including the IT programming (they attended training courses in IT during weekends and visited a TV studio in Cologne, Germany), they





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Luxembourg.  
Project carried out by the informal group of young people 'De Periskop', Luxembourg.

designed the content and they planned and controlled the budget. The application for a Youth in Action grant was also written by themselves.

To launch the app, they presented it in the school during an event with a concert, and promotional T-shirts and flyers. They also promoted it outside the school: they developed a logo, wrote press releases and contacted local media. By late 2012 the app had been downloaded by 900 people.

They learnt to work continuously on a project, to organise themselves and to recover from setbacks and disappointments by continuing to work on their concept.

The project ran for seven months from the end of 2011. Ten young people were involved, aged from 15 to 17. The app won a prize in July 2012, the annual Prix Aline Mayrisch for special creativity among schoolchildren. ■

**'I never thought I would manage such a huge project. But failure wasn't an option... It was difficult to work out all the details, but it was great to succeed. I would love to do it again. No adults — what a great idea ... but sometimes we suffered..'**

31



## Generating cultural warmth in a freezing room

32

In the remote Snæfellsnes peninsula in Iceland, a theatre — called Frystiklefinn, which means ‘freezing room’ — has been created. It has enhanced local culture. It has also generated new opportunities for young people.

Over the course of six months in 2011, a group of young people rented an old and dilapidated fish freezing plant in the village of Rif, renovated it, and turned it into a theatre, fully equipped with sound and lighting that they installed themselves. To help them with these tasks, they involved other local young people — many of them with fewer opportunities, including unemployed young immigrants and people with social problems. Once the theatre was set up, the group prepared and staged a new play, called *Góðirhálsar*, based on the semi-historical legend of Axlar-Björn, a 16th century serial killer from the region.

The project was conceived and managed by five young Icelanders, all between 18 and 30 years old, who had





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Iceland.

Project carried out by the informal group of young people Frystiklefinn Leikhús, Iceland.

backgrounds in political science, graphic design, lighting, sound and acting. After the project ended, the theatre continued to operate, with additional home-grown shows and with other acting groups visiting. It also hosted a youth arts festival in July 2012. Some of the participants managed to use the project to create part-time employment.

The young people involved converted an idea into a reality, taking an active role in shaping their own community and creating new opportunities for themselves. The project demonstrated how creativity and entrepreneurship can be stimulated by setting up something new, from scratch — and how young people’s general employability can be boosted by this experience. The participants found that they had learnt more than they had expected — including social and civic competences acquired through communicating with external stakeholders, and a sense of achievement both from seeing for themselves what they had done and from the extensive positive feedback on the project. ■

**‘I learnt a lot of useful skills — not just in art, but in knocking down walls, putting in electrical wiring, writing grant requests and communicating with people on the project and in the local community.’**

**‘Frystiklefinn gave me an insight into the world of theatre, and made me interested in acquiring skills in electronics or carpentry.’**



## Change laboratory

34

**Social entrepreneurship** is a new concept in Latvia. Most people know nothing about it, and there are hardly any social businesses operating there. So this training course was designed primarily for non-profit and non-governmental organisations dealing with non-formal education, to explore social entrepreneurship as an alternative to grant-based funding. The participants — people working in the third sector — were offered a view of how to take advantage of social business opportunities, and were given some relevant skills.

The programme provided hands-on experience in creating low-cost social entrepreneurship projects in the areas the participants chose — environment and sustainable development, education, intercultural collaboration, support for people with disabilities, rural development or youth work. The participants generated business models, wrote business plans, evaluated marketing tools and learnt to pitch their ideas convincingly. As an experiment, the participants were challenged to start a business selling products or offering services, but using EUR 10 or less as a starting capital, with any additional funding coming from business profits. The course examined the success factors in setting up social enterprises. And throughout, it encouraged participants to develop their sense of initiative and their capacities for analysing and overcoming obstacles, and identifying and maximising opportunities in the social sector.

The project also raised public awareness in Latvia about social entrepreneurship and the programmes that exist to help social business start-ups. Communication with the wider public was a major element of the project, and featured a website, regular updates on social media about the course and its outcomes and information about available support. The organisers have since participated in meetings, presentations and conferences



A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Latvia. Project carried out by Piepildīto sapnu istaba, Latvia; AEGEE-Patra, Greece; Parteneriat pentru Dezvoltarea Capitalului Uman si Alternativa Sociala, Romania; Stowarzyszenie 'Młodzież, Integracja, Aktywność', Poland; Associacao Hemisferios Solidarios, Portugal; Estonian Unesco Youth Association, Estonia; ACHO — Aktivne chvíle oddychu, Slovakia; Europos savanoriø tarnybos asociacija SALTES, Lithuania; Znanstveno-raziskovalno združenje za umetnost, kulturno-izobraževalne programe in tehnologijo EPeKa, Slovenia; Exchange net, Czech Republic; Compass Európaifjúsági Közösségért Egyesület, Hungary; Tamam, Sweden.



concerning social entrepreneurship, to share their training experience. In 2012 several such projects were set up in Latvia.

The one-week course took place in Riga and Ciruli in October 2011, and was attended by 24 participants aged between 18 and 30, from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. It was hosted by 'Room of fulfilled dreams', a Latvian organisation that supports young unemployed people and promotes social entrepreneurship and creative approaches in education, and the participating partners were all non-profit and non-governmental organisations providing non-formal learning opportunities to young people from different social and ethnic backgrounds.

Since the course ended, some of the participants started their own business, including an online shop and cafe with educational toys in Moldova. Others are developing business concepts or are learning more about becoming social entrepreneurs. The training team has also been asked to provide advice and support for similar educational activities on social entrepreneurship. ■

'Going abroad and encountering other people and other cultures gives you new ideas to start a business.'

'The trainers changed my way of thinking, developed my imagination. It was first time I saw myself as a social businessman, and also this training gave me the courage to dare, to share and to think big things about myself and the world.'

'Sometimes taking decisions is difficult because of a lack of support, lack of confidence or lack of enough people daring enough to share your dreams and try as a team to make it come true.'

'People should be aware that every simple business could be turned into a social business and this way help people who really need it.'



## Bringing Europe to Marseille

36

**Four young students in Marseille** created a new way of celebrating Europe day, by displaying huge photographs of other European cities on billboards. The aim was to give people walking through the streets of Marseille a novel sense of being European on Europe day. It was a concrete example of young people demonstrating civic engagement, by creating a project that emphasised European citizenship.

This project was highly innovative in using advertising hoardings for non-commercial information. The team started by taking photos in seven cities. One week was spent in each of the selected cities, obtaining photographs that captured the specific atmosphere of each of them. Back in Marseille, the team negotiated advertising space from billboard companies, then chose the most appropriate pictures for different streets in Marseille, seeking a visual interaction between a photograph and its surroundings. In addition, the team presented the project to an advertising company in Marseille and local advertisers, who agreed to cooperate with the campaign.

The group not only showed a keen sense of initiative, but they also developed real skills in teamwork,





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in France.

Project carried out by Communes européennes du Var, France.

entrepreneurship and in negotiating with partners at a senior level — including the EU office in Marseille and local advertisers. On many occasions they had to be very persuasive to win cooperation. They had to communicate in foreign languages, too, while they were on location in the other European cities that were featured in their photographic tour. They also gained new digital competences, in working with photographs at professional level, all the way from taking the picture to post-production and large-scale display.

Most of the group are now developing entrepreneurship further. Some started a fair-trade T-shirt company, and one made films about disabled people and migrants, and is now running a project to promote volunteering, non-formal learning and access to culture, with a focus on incentives for young people from disadvantaged inner city areas (<http://www.tempoconnect.com>).

The photographic tour of seven European cities took place in July–August 2005, and the exhibition in the streets of Marseille in May 2006. The project involved four French students in their mid-20s, and partner organisations included the European youth hostelling federation and the Clear Channel advertising company in Marseille. ■

**‘If I had not taken part in this project, and had not learned what I learned, my new project to promote European volunteering could never have happened.’**

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## A 'second home' for immigrants to Norway

38

**Young immigrants** in the Norwegian town of Drammen set up a cafe — called 'Second home' — to provide a meeting place for other young people coming to the country from different cultures and with different languages. They designed it as a place where people from elsewhere could feel at home, and to increase tolerance and understanding of the multicultural society in Drammen.

The project involved young Norwegians, and adults too, who could help young immigrants to find their place. The cafe, open one day a week, offered not only conversation and a welcome, and past-times such as billiards, but also workshops, lectures about Norwegian society, training in activities such as first-aid, introductions to local sports and leisure clubs, and the chance to meet older guest speakers and local people.

The project, initiated by Intermezzo Youth, an organisation of mainly non-Norwegian young people, provided an arena for real integration of immigrants with local people, and helped them all towards becoming confident and tolerant European citizens.





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Norway.  
Project carried out by Intermezzo Ungdomsorganisasjon, Norway.

There was a strongly practical aspect to the project, too. Assistance to the young immigrants included such simple but necessary tasks as helping read letters and getting information. It also contributed to personal as well as social development, in an open-minded ambience that helped to generate trust and to promote non-formal learning. At the same time, the project also boosted capacity among the young people involved, who had to prepare, implement and evaluate the activities. Everyone involved was made more aware of their own potential for improving the quality of their own lives and of those around them, by taking greater responsibility and exercising initiative. The group grew continuously and new friendships were made.

‘Second home’ took place in Drammen, Norway from May to December 2012. Thirty young people aged 16 to 30 took part in the project.

The Intermezzo Youth organisation organised the project, and partners included Aktiv Ungdom, Drammen municipality, career centre, Akademiet high school, Drammen chess club, Drammen tourism association, Red Cross, Drammen pistol club. ■

‘We knew how difficult it was to get answers to all your questions when the country you find yourself in is so different to what you’re used to.’

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## Helping young Belgians become independent

40

**This project was designed to help young people** in the German-speaking part of Belgium become creative and independent, by giving them new opportunities for learning about entrepreneurship.

Weaknesses in young people's confidence and skills in innovation, creativity and developing an entrepreneurial spirit have been repeatedly revealed by consultations that have taken place within the framework of the Polish, Danish and Cypriot EU Presidencies. In the German-speaking community of Belgium, for instance, young people complained of a lack of encouragement for self-employment and a lack of awareness of entrepreneurship.

In response, the regional youth council created a platform where those gaps could be filled by exchanges with young people. Two events were organised on the theme of 'Young — dynamic — independent', where career planning experts and people who were self-employed offered advice, assistance and information.

The events took place in the towns of Eupen and St Vith in April 2012, with the involvement of the local junior





A seminar funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the German-speaking community of Belgium.  
Project carried out by the National Working Group, Belgium.

chambers of commerce. The programmes were geared to providing initial insights into starting a business. In each case, a keynote speaker, already self-employed, outlined the prospects — and the obstacles — of being successfully self-employed. Then the young people who came along were divided into working groups, where they discussed working for themselves with other self-employed people from various fields and experts in career planning, business start-ups, insurance and taxation.

To attract young people, publicity campaigns were created with a deliberately informal approach, directly addressing the ideas of 'someday being your own boss', 'living out your dreams' and 'letting your career ideas run free'.

The project was conceived and run by the regional youth council, and the young people who came along to the events were mostly pupils in their last year at school and trainees. The experts who took part also found that it was a good opportunity to learn more about what young people need if they are to acquire the skills and competences to exercise greater independence and entrepreneurship. ■

**'How often do young self-employed people get the opportunity to discuss starting up a business? In just an evening, I learnt so much from experts on taxation and creating a company — and made some contacts I know I can call on if I need further advice.'**

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## Opening young people's eyes to citizenship

42

**Four young people created a magazine in** Malta — known as 'Wink' — aimed at a young audience, and with a focus on citizenship, solidarity and the environment. The monthly print run of 5 500 copies was distributed in 50 public libraries and secondary schools. The team researched, edited and promoted each issue themselves, working with special contributors on each topic covered.

The magazine carried strong messages to stimulate young people's involvement in the society they are part of. In a cooperative venture with a local environmental NGO, 'Wink' ran a recycling campaign to encourage the reuse of sheets of paper that still had a blank side, and promoted the collection of waste or rough paper with a stand at the University of Malta. The magazine also carried a regular 'green tips' feature on the environment. And it launched a campaign on positive living, known as 'The positive diary', which urged





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Malta.

Project carried out by the informal group 'Wink', Malta.

young people to take more control of their own lives to change things for the better, and offered some practical tips on everything from lifestyle to personal relations. The team contacted local personalities to obtain their support for the campaign.

Schools made use of 'Wink' in lessons in English, science, geography and social studies, and the entire content of the magazine was licensed under Creative Commons 3.0, to allow free use by anyone, promoting both informal and non-formal learning. Awareness was raised of the work of local NGOs through collaboration with students involved in organisations that deal with the environment, and social and animal welfare. The students uploaded blogs onto the 'Wink' website about their experiences.

The project ran from July 2009 to June 2010 in Marsaskala, Malta. The four members of the team were aged between 18 and 30. ■

'The Youth in Action programme gave us the opportunity to turn an idea into a real working project, and it provided us with a huge learning curve, giving us innumerable insights into organisation of a large-scale project as well as into art of publishing.'

'I was shy about taking initiatives or taking on responsibilities like this, but this project showed me that if you focus on your objective, share it with like-minded people and have sufficient drive, your dreams can see the light of day, and large-scale projects like this can be carried out successfully. It was a rollercoaster of self-discovery.'

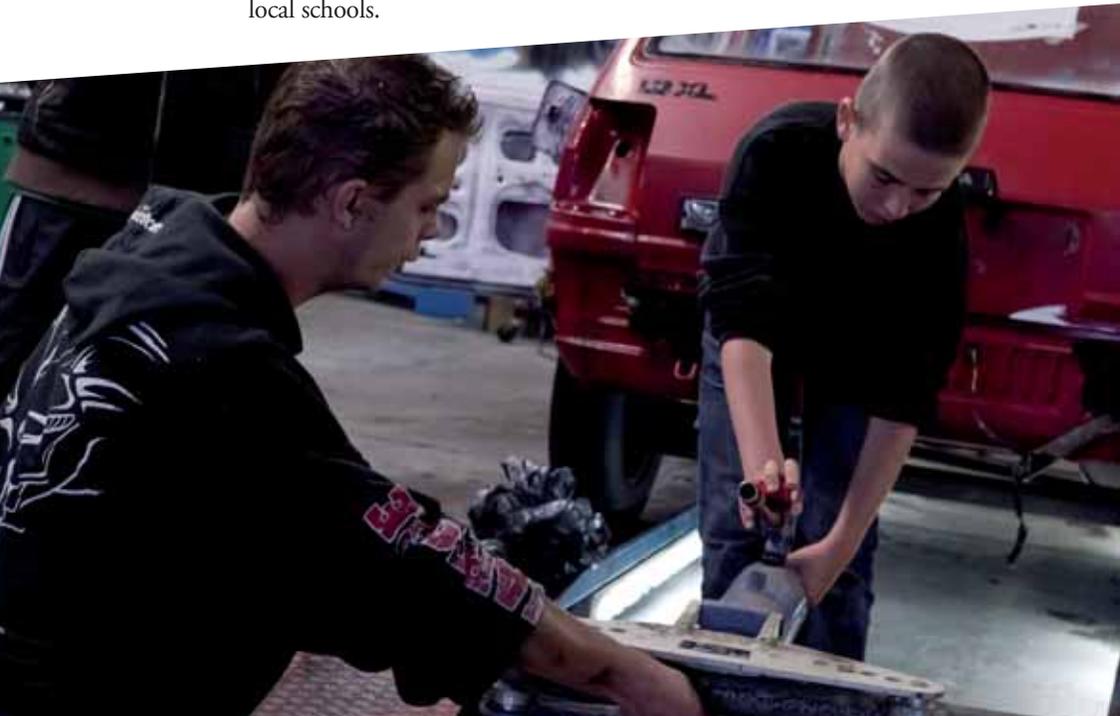


## The mechanics of developing a sense of engagement

44

In a small town in the Netherlands countryside, four young men created a project based on stock-car racing that gave a new sense of engagement to nearly a dozen local young people with educational and social problems.

The participants worked for four months to get two stock-cars into shape and ready to race. They had guidance from an experienced car mechanic, and learned the basics of car engineering. But they also played an active part in realising the project as a whole: they got involved in fund-raising, they found sponsors, they arranged test rides and they painted the car. The high point of the project was competing in a regional stock-car race. And the project was rounded off with a presentation to sponsors, parents and local schools.





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the Netherlands.

Project carried out by the Stichting Wiel, the Netherlands.

The result was not only that the young people found a new way to spend their free time and learnt a lot about car mechanics and basic competences in science and technology; they also responded to the challenges of working together — learning how to cooperate, to control their own emotions and to take responsibility. Their involvement in running the project taught them about management and about working within a budget, and developed their self-confidence and capacities for communication, including in public. And the sense of achievement and the disciplines acquired gave them a new interest in pursuing their education. They are all now active in the local youth centre, deploying their new-found sense of entrepreneurship in helping to set up projects there for other young people.

The four young men who initiated the project were aged between 18 and 23. They had a vocational education background and were aware, from their own experience, of the difficulties young people encounter in finding a place in society without education, employment, interests or any sort of goal in your life. They designed the project to give young people the chance to acquire some skills for shaping a positive future and they ran the entire exercise, with some help from a coach from Foundation Wiel.

The 10 young people involved in the activities were between 13 and 15 years old, all facing educational and social obstacles, most with behavioural problems, and all at risk of dropping out of school.

The project took place between July 2011 and November 2011 in Elburg, the Netherlands. ■

‘These young people have shown that they have a lot of potential and that they can achieve a lot as long as they have a goal.’

45



## Stage by stage to new confidence

46

**This project gave unemployed young people** the opportunity to use drama to analyse their situation and experiences and to discover and unleash their own capacities. As a result, they built-up their self-esteem and learnt new skills. By engaging in a performance, and everything that was necessary to create and prepare it, they strengthened their sense of initiative and their abilities to organise and present. The project also allowed them to share their vision and understanding of youth unemployment with decision-makers and the wider public.

With the help of a drama teacher, the young people created a play about their own lives. They were in charge of the preparations, acting and stage techniques, and they also filmed the performance. The improvisation methods they used in creating the play gave them an opportunity to explore not only their own experiences, but also to take account of the broader context of their lives — including the way media cover youth issues, general public attitudes and European youth employment strategies. This helped them to refine and clarify the message in the play they created. Not everyone acted, but everyone took part one way or another, in initial discussions, in marketing, in stage technique or in technical assistance.

They performed the play in the town hall, in front of local officials, and invited politicians responsible for youth policy. After the performance, the young people switched places physically with the audience. People working at the job centre or social benefits



A seminar funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Finland.  
Project carried out by Liedonkunta/Kisällikellari, Finland.

office, or sitting on the local council, took on the role of unemployed young people, while the young people themselves acted as the decision-makers.

Since the whole event was filmed, a DVD made it possible to share the messages with youth workers, entrepreneurship educators and students in a special preparatory class of a vocational school. The event was also covered in the local media.

The project took place over September–November 2011, in Lieto and Raisio. The participants, Finnish youngsters mainly aged from 18 to 25, were local unemployed young people. They gained a significant sense of achievement from the project and displayed a high degree of engagement and motivation. They also learned how to allocate tasks and responsibilities in a project, how to use their talent and how to stand up and make a statement in public. ■

**'I feel like I've got back  
my human dignity.'**

47



## Leading to successful youth projects

48

**A city park was revitalised**, a club for theatre improvisation was started and a street art summit was held as a result of a training course in leadership in the Czech Republic. And these are just some of the tangible results of the ‘academy of young leaders’. Other projects included discussion weekends for economics students, an intergenerational festival of ageing and open-air concerts.

This long-term training course helped a group of young Czechs to unlock their leadership skills. It provided a sequence of non-formal group training sessions over the course of a year, using case studies, field visits and discussions. Initial training examined the qualities and characteristics of leadership, as well as providing training in project management, needs analysis and group dynamics. Further sessions boosted skills in project development, team-building and motivation. And a final session gave guidance on how to evaluate a project and how each individual can steer his or her own learning process.





A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the Czech Republic.

Individual coaching was also provided on project preparation and development, in which the participants had to do work on their own to plan and implement concrete projects. They were supported in developing their initiatives, which were designed for their own local communities. They had to find a team for the project and carry it out with others, so they learnt not only about project management, but also about teamwork, how to cooperate with local civic administrations and how to interact with the media. At the same time, they got to know their local community better.

The project involved 22 young Czechs from a range of social and regional backgrounds, and took place in Hrádek nad Nisou in September 2011, Litomyšl in December 2011 and in Řehlovice in July 2012. ■

**'This was valuable training over the course of an entire year. And with the help of the trainers, we did good teamwork too!'**



## BringArt bike-design workshop

50

**Secondary-school students in Budapest** became involved in a pioneering volunteer project that led to three valuable outcomes. The most concrete result was that disadvantaged families were given professionally rebuilt and highly decorated bicycles. But the students who volunteered to carry out the renovation and decoration were also beneficiaries: they explored new decorative techniques and new sources of inspiration, and developed a new sense of teamwork. The third principal outcome was the boost that the success of this project gave to young people taking initiatives to improve the world around them.

Before the decorating started, the students were familiarised with the motifs of traditional artwork in distinct cultures: Arabic, Aztec, Black-African, Celtic, Hungarian, Japanese, North-American Indian and Oceania-Indonesian civilizations. With that background, they were invited to create designs to decorate the frames of the 16 bicycles. Then they





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Hungary.  
Project carried out by the informal group BringArt, Hungary.

received instruction in diverse painting methods and techniques. And over the space of two two-day sessions, they then applied their new knowledge to painting the bikes, with constant support and guidance. The painted frames were finally professionally varnished at NB Paintworks Studio (Budapest), and the students helped specialist bike technicians from Bringa Konyha (Budapest) to reassemble the bicycles. As a closing event, the students were invited to personally donate the reborn bikes to needy families and charity organisations.

The 16 volunteer students, aged 15 to 18, attended a school that specialises in using art in the education of young people with behavioural problems or impaired abilities. The project took place in April–June 2011, and was run by BringArt, which started as an informal group of young people wanting to promote initiative and social awareness, and which has since become a foundation, planning new projects. ■

**‘The participants enjoyed working together, but they also learned a lot about different cultures and different painting methods. Being engaged in social work was new to them, and their happiness was evident when they handed over the bikes — that they had so carefully renovated and decorated — to young people with fewer opportunities.’**

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## Rocking around Europe

52

**An informal group of young artists** from Sweden and the United Kingdom relied exclusively on their own ideas and skills to create a short film that explores the characteristic adolescent search for direction in a way that has resonance for young people across Europe. They worked together in writing the script, they acted in it, they directed and edited it and they wrote the music for it themselves. And when it was completed, they promoted its distribution via screenings, school visits and festivals. Sharing the experience and the responsibilities was central to the project. The climate was much more open than is customary in film-making.

The plot of the film reflects the underlying attempt by these artists from different countries and cultures to find new bridges through art. Entitled 'Bergtagen' in Swedish and 'By the mountain' in English, the film recounts the break-up of a young British rock band during a European tour. In Sweden, the lead singer walks out on the band,





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Sweden.  
Project carried out by the informal group Mumrik Film och Drama, Sweden.

and the rest of the band (aided by some of his childhood friends) try to find him before the band's producers learn what has happened and sack him. The fugitive lead singer, trying to hitchhike back to Scotland, meets a young girl who is a Sami — the indigenous people of the Nordic region — and they overcome language barriers as they travel the highway together. Meanwhile, the band enlists the help of locals in their search and learns a lot about Scandinavian culture.

The project gave the participants a new sense of teamwork — they cooperated at a distance in writing the script, then came together in Sweden for the shooting. It gave them real experience in film production, and several of them obtained jobs in media production as a result. It also provided them with the chance to learn about and understand different cultures. The film subsequently received screenings, with the presence of the team, allowing discussion on youth projects.

The project took place over 12 months from July 2010, and involved eight participants from Sweden and nine from the United Kingdom, all in the 18–24 age range. ■

**'The key factors are to get everybody to speak up — the project will be so much better if everyone feels responsibility and participation — and to have a good coach who supports and advises.'**

**'Being a producer here was more like being a project manager. I had to make sure everything flowed and that the group worked well together.'**



## Taking initiatives to break out of the box

54



**Twenty-five young people from across Europe** were given a chance to ‘break out of the box’ when they came to Pitsilia, a mountainous area in Cyprus, for a training session on creative entrepreneurship. They learnt what it means to be an entrepreneur and what skills are needed to be successful.

The course was designed to stimulate their sense of initiative, to encourage them to think imaginatively and originally and to take risks in pursuing the goals they set themselves. It aimed to show that being proactive, independent and innovative were assets in their personal and social life, as much as at work. At the same time, the participants — from many different countries and cultures — strengthened their skills in teamwork, organisation, communication, presentation and cooperation. They acquired new skills in self-assessment and in analysing their own needs and expectations, as well as in discussing youth unemployment and their own national or local cultures — perceiving more clearly how becoming an entrepreneur can be one of the solutions for youth unemployment.

They learnt about different working environments and practices across European countries, and about European opportunities under Youth in Action. This led into discussions on political, social and cultural processes in Europe, and on policies and resources that could help young people to realise their potential and to become active European citizens. Trainers helped the participants in generating ideas for new youth exchange projects and in carrying out initial planning for them.



A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Cyprus.

Project carried out by Network of Pitsilia Youth Groups, Cyprus; AEGEE Moskva, Russian Federation; Armenian Centre for youth exchange, Armenia; Udruga za razvoj zajednice BNM, Croatia; Minorities of Israel, Israel; Media Education Centre, Serbia; Útilapu Nemzetközi Építőtábor Hálózat, Hungary; Institute of Ukrainian Studies, Ukraine; MTU Islander, Estonia; Free and Real, Greece; Azerbaijan Youth for Peace, Azerbaijan.



The project represented a 'breaking out of the box' in other respects too. In this region, young people face geographical obstacles as well as fewer opportunities, and the Network of Pitsilia Youth Groups that hosted the project has helped youngsters in the area to take part in Youth in Action activities. The training course was developed to help overcome the challenges of self-esteem, diminished well-being and isolation that unemployment often presents. In addition, entrepreneurship had not previously featured very highly in the Youth in Action programme in Cyprus, and is not a common training topic there. The exchanges of ideas and the links created across Europe continue to broaden opportunities after the course and beyond Cyprus.

The project took place in October 2011. The participants came from different ethnic, religious, social and economic contexts from 12 countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Russian Federation, Serbia and Ukraine.

**'I discovered how valuable non-formal education is and that the best way to learn and to teach is through experience.'**

**'This meeting encouraged me to be creative and gave me some practical skills in communicating, negotiating and decision-making.'**

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## Young women bring drama to rural Finland

56

**A group of young women** were keen to widen the range of leisure activities for young people in their village, so they decided to start a drama club open for all young people living nearby. Not only did they start a club, but they created a show — a play based on a well-known children's tale, 'When the robbers came to Cardamom town'. Then they performed the play in villages in the neighbourhood, so that many more local people could see it.

The project brought together a dozen young people from across the surrounding area. With the help of a coach, they learned about theatre techniques — set design, costumes, acting, directing, marketing and front-of-house management. Each was allowed to develop their own particular interests. Then, during the rehearsal phase, they explored the themes of the play, particularly how to cope with situations of discrimination when some people are different to others. This extended into discussions on citizenship at national and European level, and on how individuals can influence their own environment. Since the rehearsal period coincided with national elections, in which





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Finland.

Project carried out by Hankasalmen 4H-yhdistysry, Finland.

multicultural societies and racism were frequent topics of discussion, the group was able to make its own examination of these subjects.

The members of the group developed a sense of initiative and discovered that they could make a difference in the place they lived. In addition, they learnt how to cooperate and they boosted their confidence in themselves and their self-esteem. Four of the young women behind the project continued the activity by making their own small project, and the drama club continued in cooperation with the local administration.

The project took place in the rural municipality of Hankasalmi, Finland, in the first six months of 2011. It was run by Hankasalmen 4H-yhdistysry in Finland, a youth development organisation that supports entrepreneurship, employability and active citizenship among young people. The initial group included many youngsters with difficult backgrounds because of health issues, unemployment in their family or social problems. ■

**'I learned that everything doesn't always go as planned but that hard work pays off, and that in a short time you can create something great. Participating made me more open towards new people, and showed me how important it is to do things together as a group.'**

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**'Today I dare to be the centre of attention, and despite how nervous I am, I've now got the courage to go for it. I'm a lot braver now than before.'**

**'The following summer, me and three of my friends decided to make our own summer jobs by performing. We rehearsed a play, had eight shows, got new experiences and also money! What a nice way to earn money by doing something you love with the people you love.'**



## Spinning a new tale of the industrial past

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**The cultural links** between past and present were demonstrated in a novel way to a wide public in a project in Liechtenstein. Young artists created an exhibition celebrating the fifth anniversary of the Gasometer, an arts centre in Triesen. The exhibition was organised by an art group called '415' that aims to create a bridge between art and daily life. Their method was to utilise new combinations of art, design and culture, drawing on the history of the place and the weaving and woodwork industries that were central to its past, as well as the arts centre's own previous exhibitions.

The result was a celebration of the historical background of the Gasometer, bringing together the cultures of yesterday and today with the theme of making new things out of old. The exhibition made use of basic materials — fabric and wood — and featured a historic Spoerry and Cie weaving loom.

New cultural expressions were the concrete result of the project, with a three-week programme of concerts, readings, recitals, workshops and a fashion show. But





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Liechtenstein.  
Project carried out by the art group '415', Liechtenstein.

just as significant were the new skills that the artists acquired as they designed, planned, organised and created the exhibition. The young artists also widened their own creative experience as they worked together in exploring and researching local history, and building an event around it. They developed new competence in teamwork, public relations, communication and event management — which required them to become experts at last-minute improvisation — and acquired a new sense of entrepreneurship. And many of the exhibits they created — sprayed pieces of wood, decorative lighting, scarves and bags — were sold during the exhibition.

The project took place in late March and early April 2011. The vernissage welcomed 120 visitors, and overall there were 350 visitors to the exhibition, which received extensive media coverage. The exhibits were created by three women aged 25 and 26 from Liechtenstein, one with a training in design, another who studied cultural management and one a psychologist. ■

**‘The project enriched and developed our skills: we learnt to communicate within the team and to the outside world, to make proper business plans and to turn theory into practice.’**

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## Encouraging the journey towards entrepreneurship

60

**Young people in regions with weak economies** face particular difficulties in finding work — and they often suffer additionally from an under-supply of local examples of entrepreneurship. A project in Bulgaria gave a group of 30 youth workers from Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldova, Russia, Spain and Ukraine insights into how tourism could offer opportunities for unemployed young people to find their way into the world of work.

The project made use of non-formal learning and interactive activities to examine the challenges that young people in such areas encounter and to draw comparisons with the situation in cities. It focused particularly on how unemployment in rural areas can be overcome and start-up businesses in tourism can be a source of jobs.

Central to the course was ensuring that the young people from different countries and cultures had the chance to get to know each other better, to promote intercultural dialogue and to discover the situation elsewhere for youth employment. The learning process





A Youth Exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Bulgaria.

Project carried out by Association for Development of Alternative Tourism — Koriten, Bulgaria; Posledniaya nadezhda, Belarus; Perspective Centre of Initiatives, Russia; Krimskaya Liga, Ukraine; My Generation, Moldova; Asociación Xuvenil Vrenza, Spain.



focused on active participation, so the young people received practical training and practised their learning skills. All the participants had to make presentations on their respective organisations and their aims, and a part of the course consisted of team-building activities.

There were discussions and workshops, and excursions to learn about the appreciation of cultural heritage and to see and discuss successful rural tourism ventures.

The youth workers also met local people, and engaged with them — often through role-play — in discovering the assets and drawbacks of poorly developed regions. Exercises led to depictions of possible rural scenarios, followed up with analysis and comment. And sessions focused on professional development and ideas on how to build careers, and to set and achieve personal goals. Representatives of local and national authorities took part in exchanges on youth employment, and subjects covered included ideas on education and qualifications, interactions with local administration and politicians and funding possibilities under European programmes.

The ‘Entrepreneurship and youth in regions with weak economies’ project was run by the Association for Development of Alternative Tourism in Koriten. It took place during one week in July 2012 in Mezdra, Bulgaria, in collaboration with youth organisations from five other countries. ■

‘The discussions were interesting and useful on youth unemployment and the lack of jobs in rural areas. These issues are very relevant to us and our work.’

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## From earth to body, from body to heart

62

**A group of Turkish students of jewellery** in the town of Afyonkarahisar decided to make use of the offcuts of ornamental stones that are usually thrown away. The initial impulse was to preserve materials that had been formed by nature over millions of years and to reduce environmental pollution from unnecessary waste disposal. But the project developed into a broader exploration of recycling of wastes.

Their project, called ‘From earth to body, from body to heart’, investigated attitudes to surplus inorganic and organic materials. They explored giving a second life to discarded objects by encrusting them with fragments of ornamental stones such as agate, chalcedony and opal — including the stones from olives, peaches and dates, seashells found on the beach, pine cones from picnic areas, meat bones retrieved from dumpsters and animal horns.

The widened horizons this gave to their imagination propelled them into developing the project into a broader approach to environmental consciousness, with an emphasis on traditional handicrafts, which they called the ‘Jewellery club’. They aimed to treat the environment with greater respect, to recycle more and to support the jewellery and ornamental stone market with new alternative products. They realised that not all surplus material is trash and they worked together as a team in experimenting with new ways to create new products with low costs and high labour content.





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Turkey.

Project carried out by the informal group Kuyumculuk Kulübü, Turkey.

The project created employment possibilities for the participants as they progressed from being passive spectators of their world to becoming active participants in the education system. They deliberately included young people with limited opportunities, in an attempt to provide equality of opportunity. Workshops, site visits and seminars brought the project to the attention of local secondary schools. In one of the activities, they engaged young people in constructing panoramic pictures using discarded ornamental stones, which involved extensive research on values and stories from their countries, and confronted them with different cultures. And the project culminated in an exhibition and an award ceremony.

The project developed a sense of entrepreneurship among the group of eight young people that ran it, and also helped the 65 young people who became involved in the project to express their ideas freely, to develop a critical capacity, to act for the good of society, to speak and to listen and to treat other people with respect regardless of their culture, gender or status. It also received wide media coverage.

The project took place at Afyon Kocatepe University and Iscehisar Vocational High School, Turkey, from September to December 2011. ■

**'I learned how I can use nature without harming it, and how to turn what I learned into allowing me to earn money. I managed to defend my own ideas but also learned to treat people more respectfully.'**

**'My point of view has been changed thanks to this project. I realised that things I saw as trash were jewels ready to be worked on. I am now more confident about my future after graduation.'**

**'I learned to find answers to other difficulties in life with this project. We became people who can talk to businessmen, contribute to the environment, produce instead of consume and actually provide information.'**



## Rescuing a sense of engagement

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**Citizens of Sieradz alerted the police** when a group of young people started painting graffiti across the town centre late one night. But the spray guns and stencils were fully authorised. This was the eye-catching start of an ambitious project to engage local people in learning about first-aid and life-saving techniques.

Over the course of the next three months, a sequence of high-profile rescue services events kept the attention of local people — demonstrations on land and water, involving ambulances, divers, firemen, police, paramedics and the army, in simulated fires, evacuations and traffic accidents, culminating in a major emergency simulation with 30 fire units, rescue tents, a field hospital and even a helicopter.

In parallel, through a series of workshops, 20 people were trained in life-saving techniques and two volunteer groups were created that are now active locally and train other groups — including for the Euro 2012 football championship.

The project was set up by a group of young people who had an interest in life-saving services and who wanted to spread their enthusiasm for social engagement more widely in the community. They had to work hard to capture attention and win support for this project. It faced widespread initial indifference and they had to come up with ideas to win support. They organised a bike race in cooperation with the local radio station, they held a ‘neighbours’ day’ to promote the idea of local engagement among local people and they gained the interest of the wider media through holding press



A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Poland.

Project carried out by Fundacja Inicjatyw Niemożliwych 'Cudosfera', Poland.

conferences. They had to display initiative; overcome obstacles; work as a team; plan, organise and manage events; liaise with local authorities and businesses; and make public presentations of what they were trying to achieve.

The project ran from September to December 2011 in Sieradz, Poland.

Eventually, the projects proved successful and public interest was obtained. Now the group has been invited to become involved in other local projects. As a spin-off, some of the team have started a foundation that continues to organise youth projects and to create a social cooperative to promote cycling, with the hope that it can eventually become a source of income for them, with a bike shop, a repair shop, bike rental and a cycling club. With equipment that they have bought, they are also developing a bicycle voluntary rescue service, acting as a search group with patrol bicycles. They are also organising a social economy day to help spread the concept more widely in Poland. ■

**'Taking part in the Youth in Action programme not only helps develop a sense of entrepreneurship in young people, but can also be seen as the beginning of professional life.'**

**'Youth in Action has now become my lifestyle. The first project in 2008 triggered the creation of our foundation and first ideas about social economy. Thanks to the programme I have made many close friends and also established contacts throughout the country.'**



## Guiding young people towards their personal paths

66

**Twenty-three European youth workers** spent six days exploring the issues, challenges and opportunities around youth unemployment and social exclusion, and how entrepreneurial learning can help. The trainers for this course had all worked with young people directly and had hands-on knowledge of the difficulties that young people face in finding their personal and professional paths, particularly when they come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Through non-formal learning methods, they encouraged the youth workers to generate new ideas, by taking a fresh look at education and employment and at how stimulating entrepreneurship can help young people to realise their potential.

The training activities were designed to create partnerships and build acquaintanceships among the participants, and to explore their own personal and professional backgrounds, motivations and ambitions. They were initially prompted to reflect on what they had themselves learnt, in formal, non-formal and informal settings, and on how their own ambitions might be turned into reality. Then they looked more widely at what young people need as they seek to realise their own potential and how those needs can be met by building links to the world of work. The focus was on young people with fewer opportunities and at risk of social exclusion, and who face difficulties in accessing employment because of their background, having left school early or under-achieved there, or gender issues.

Extensive networking resulted in social, personal and professional development for the participants, including using foreign languages, increasing their capacity for



A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Ireland. Project carried out by Clear — Centre for learning, education, awareness and revival, Ireland; A.C.T.O.R. Cultural Association for Theatre and Origami, Romania; Centro Internaciona lpara a Promocao da Educacao e do Desenvolvimento (CEIPES-Portugal), Portugal; Unghugar, Iceland; Patronus, Slovakia; Associazione Bashu @ Onlus, Italy; Kopfstand, Austria.



learning and widening their cultural awareness. The participants gained new confidence in using novel methodologies and exchanged new ideas for preparing projects, some of which are now underway.

The trainers, from eight different countries, provided practical information about opportunities in Youth in Action and how the programme can be used in helping younger people to learn, particularly when they are unemployed. Much of the attention was given to exploring how to help young people overcome challenges, rejection and frustration, and how to help them to focus their energies more constructively.

The course took place in July 2011, in Wicklow, Ireland, and the participants came from Austria, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Turkey. ■

**'I gained self-confidence, had new experiences and met great people.'** 67



## Documenting how theatre helped integrate migrants

68

**Teater Polyfon is an NGO in Trondheim, Norway,** providing theatre experience for immigrants and asylum seekers. Over the last three years it has had a positive effect on the young people taking part in its programmes and helped their personal development, particularly by boosting their power of creative expression and their ability to share stories.

Five of the young immigrants working in a team have documented the achievements, making a book of interviews and photos, and a webpage. Parts of the book were presented as an exhibition in conjunction with a youth exchange that Teater Polyfon organised. The book contained interviews, scripts developed over recent years, photos, experiences and articles, recounting how Teater Polyfon helped immigrants become part of the local community, and showed the positive potential of immigration rather than immigration as a social problem.

The five young people developed their social, creative and language skills while working on the final products. They





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Norway.

Project carried out by Teater Polyfon, Norway.

took part in workshops on photography, teamwork and creative writing — workshops that were open to anyone else in the community who was interested, to help in making society as a whole aware of the creative potential of immigrants. As part of their non-formal learning, the team learned how to delegate, to make decisions and to consider the consequences.

One of the principal workshops offered guidance on techniques to get people to talk in an interview — in which actors from Teater Polyfon worked alongside the young refugees and immigrants. Subsequently, the workshop participants interviewed other actors from the theatre and conceived accompanying photos. These were then shot by a semi-professional photographer, while the interview texts were edited and corrected by a native Norwegian journalist.

Promotion included an exhibition of the photos in the book, street theatre by the actors from the theatre and public readings from the book by the actors interviewed. The book had a print run of 400. Copies were sent to politicians, institutions and opinion-formers, to widen understanding of and support for Teater Polyfon's pioneering work. But the book has also been sold successfully to the Norwegian public and has become a school text book. Its content was also used by a major Russian TV station in a 2011 campaign against racism. A website set up as a first step to gather and collect information remains active to allow everyone to keep sharing ideas and to stay updated about the theatre's activities.

The project ran for eight months in 2010 in Trondheim. Several of the participants have since used their newly acquired skills and confidence to pursue studies and to obtain employment. ■

'The book makes us proud. Proud of what has been achieved in Teater Polyfon and proud of what it is possible for people to achieve if they are given the chance. It has given the youngsters self-confidence to go out and get jobs.'

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## Opening up a future in Greece for immigrant girls

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**A group of youth workers** organised a project for 15 young women living on the island of Rhodes who faced particular challenges because they were immigrants, many of them from the countries in the Balkans.

The focus was on women's entrepreneurship, and the programme provided the participants — who were all 15 years old — with support in taking initiatives and reinforced their confidence that women can be active in society and in business. It also provided them with new insights into xenophobia and into how European social values combat racism and exclusion.

Over the course of six months, the young participants were encouraged to take initiatives and were given practical information about the world of work and about starting businesses — including access to information. They learnt about European Union programmes that support new entrepreneurs and provide consulting for business processes, and they had the chance to seek advice from professionals. They had meetings with official employment organisations to talk about youth entrepreneurship, with academics who spoke about the labour market and with experts from the





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Greece.

Project carried out by the Institute of Education, Development and Culture 'e-drasis', Greece.

local chamber of commerce and employment offices. They also learnt about the EU gender equality strategy.

Simulations were used to provide some entrepreneurship experience, giving the young women the chance to create their own businesses via virtual reality. Within this virtual world, they set up and managed a bookstore, a wine shop and a mini-market. This involved them in making business and marketing plans, deciding budgets, negotiating with one another and selling their products.

At the same time, and as part of the project, a survey conducted among 1 600 people explored questions relating to youth in Greece — their concerns, political participation, social and economic integration and how much they knew about European programmes.

The project allowed the young women to develop new skills. The virtual enterprises were developed in Greek, so they had to communicate in a language other than their mother tongues. Budget management refined their mathematical competencies. The participants created posters, published articles and made appearances in local media. But above all, they acquired a new sense of initiative and they developed entrepreneurship skills through the expression of business ideas.

The project, which ran from late 2009 to early 2010, offered both practical and theoretical examples of integration of immigrants on Rhodes. ■

**'We were able to meet people running local enterprises, and simulations allowed us to try managing our own enterprises in almost real-world conditions.'**

**'Innovative educational methods helped the participants boost their self-confidence and encouraged them to run their own enterprises.'**



## Turning obstacles into opportunities

72

**A sport-based project** helped bring about positive changes for young people and their communities in an inner city area in Brussels. Five enthusiasts for parkour — moving through the urban environment by vaulting, rolling, running, climbing and jumping — created an association to promote the sport, particularly among young people with fewer opportunities. Parkour, which developed out of military obstacle-course training, is non-competitive and requires no special equipment, but offers challenges that allow people to develop self-confidence.

The group received initial training on how to teach the discipline safely. They also learnt about the technical aspects of managing an association, such as accounting, negotiating contracts, and designing and creating a website. They then presented the project to youth clubs and other associations. They gave indoor and outdoor demonstrations and ran a series of 10 workshops over six months for young people. The workshops were filmed and a documentary was produced as a guidance tool to practising parkour in a secure environment. Contacts were also made with local media to publicise the project and attract interest.





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the French-speaking community of Belgium. Project carried out by the informal group Xtreme Team Parkour, Belgium.

The group raised awareness about parkour and about its association, among the general public as well as with young people. They were invited to perform at cultural events and they are now thinking about developing the ‘event’ dimension of the association.

At the same time as they were promoting the sport they enjoy, they developed skills in management, in teamwork and in dealing with unexpected challenges — such as less initial interest than foreseen from youth clubs or young people. They learnt techniques of video production, activity promotion, exploiting the web and marketing. And they managed to turn the initial idea into a self-sufficient project, with the creation of a parkour school in Belgium. The group developed new institutional contacts with the local authorities in discussions over creating an open space for parkour activities. Overall, the project gave the members of the group a chance to develop their own skills and talents and to acquire entrepreneurial skills.

The project took place in Brussels from November 2011 to April 2012. The five group members — three men and two women — were aged between 18 and 27, including people of Belgian, French, Italian-Bolivian and Mexican backgrounds. ■

‘We wouldn’t have dared to embark on this adventure without the support of the national agency and the Youth Initiative grant. Before filling in the application form, we just had an idea, but then we had to think about how to make it concrete, to calculate a budget, to plan the activities, etc.’



## New insights into asylum

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**A group of young Danes** working with refugees wanted to open a window into the enclosed life of unaccompanied children and youngsters in an asylum centre in Copenhagen. They found a way to help them express themselves, and at the same time the young Danes acquired a greater understanding of the world of asylum seekers — and learnt how to create and run a project.

The mechanism at the heart of this project was photography. Over the course of eight months, cameras and training in photography were provided to young asylum seekers at the Sjaelsmark asylum centre, and exhibitions and publicity were organised to allow their work to be widely seen. The organisers collected unwanted digital cameras via advertisements in the national media, then gave them to the young asylum seekers, so they could tell their own stories through pictures. To help them, they arranged with volunteer professional photographers to give workshops on photographic techniques and feedback on the images produced. At the end of the project, exhibitions were arranged of pictures chosen by the young asylum seekers, and the pictures were published in a photo catalogue and on an interactive website.





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Denmark.  
Project carried out by the Danish Refugee Council's youth network, Denmark.

More than 30 young asylum seekers were involved. They had come from Afghanistan, Africa and Iraq, arriving in Denmark without their parents. The project equipped them with some skills in photography and communication, but above all gave them a voice, strengthening their self-confidence. They all learnt from one another — without any need for a common language — about their distinct histories and cultures, their desires and aspirations, and their frustrations. And the engagement with the young Danes who organised the project allowed both groups new insights into one another's lives — while teaching the Danes about conflict management, cultural diversity and tolerance, as well as practical skills like logistics, budget management, public relations and fund-raising.

The project ran for eight months from September 2010, and involved 20 Danes in the 18–30 age range, belonging to the Danish Refugee Council's youth network. ■

‘Despite the tough experiences the young asylum seekers had been through, basically what they want, like all of us, is to make friendships, find a direction and be recognised as valuable persons.’

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## Battling poverty

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**An informal group of young people** in the Orava region of Slovakia decided to engage other young people in raising awareness of poverty and exclusion, stimulating their involvement in community life.

As an innovative and creative way of fund-raising, they set up a 'social bakery'. They baked bread themselves, then sold it to raise money for projects to help disadvantaged young people run by local NGOs, as well as giving bread directly to 10 families in need. At the same time, they publicised the project — and the underlying issues — in schools, through games and through activities linked to the celebration of Christmas.

Through an entertaining information campaign entitled 'What do you think?', the group used a celebration of Christmas to provoke reflection in schools and among the public about poverty. A nativity scene and theatrical performances provided the setting for a presentation on poverty, and was followed by lectures in schools about how pupils could contribute to combating it.





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Slovakia.

Project carried out by the informal group 'Allies', Slovakia.

Through a campaign called 'Go for it', the group organised public collections in return for bread produced at the social bakery. The project directly involved disadvantaged and unemployed young people in their neighbourhood, who helped to distribute the bread and even assisted with the baking itself. The final stages involved the donation of the money that had been collected to install heating in a local youth club, and the generation of publicity about the project in national and regional media and with a local poster campaign.

The project boosted the local sense of civic engagement and developed a more active attitude among the public and young people in relation to the needs of groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion. It also encouraged voluntary activity among young people and developed their skills. The young people who ran the project improved their social and presentation skills, and learnt more about effective communication, teamwork and motivation.

The project ran for seven months from December 2010, in Trstená in Slovakia, and was linked to the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The six organisers were Slovaks in the 18–30 age range, who were already engaged in local voluntary activities with children and young people in situations of disadvantage, ranging from drug addiction to homelessness. Ten local young volunteers also took part. ■

'The project showed the young participants that there are people in need in their community and that they can really do something to help. They learnt that a personal commitment is an important part of making a change.'



## From training in entrepreneurship to running a business

78

**A project in Romania** to reduce the unemployment rate among young people led to some of them starting their own business. The specific approach of the project was to increase the sense of entrepreneurship among youngsters in Cluj-Napoca, and to offer them the chance to acquire skills and competences to realise their own potential and integrate successfully into society.

The project ran from May to December 2010. Thirty-three young Romanians were involved directly and another 120 indirectly. Some were unemployed, some studying and some searching for a job after obtaining certain qualifications.

The organisers of the project started by sending a questionnaire to 300 local young people, to discover how much they knew about entrepreneurship and related training opportunities. They followed this up with a two-month information campaign that reached some 2 000 people in schools, universities and NGOs, supported by a brochure they created outlining the opportunities for obtaining information and training in entrepreneurship. This campaign also allowed many young people in the area to discover how non-formal education can really help in acquiring skills.





A Youth Initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Romania.

Project carried out by Asociația Support for Youth Development, Romania.

The project culminated in a non-formal training course for 20 young people who wanted to develop their entrepreneurial skills and to fill gaps in their knowledge that had discouraged them from starting their own businesses. For an entire week, presentations, brainstorming sessions and discussions allowed the participants to acquire technical skills in using computers, organisational skills in planning and carrying out projects and setting objectives, and teamwork skills in communicating, interacting and supporting one other. At the same time, they also learnt about European programmes and youth opportunities. The activities targeted the concepts of active citizenship, locally and in Europe, encouraging the youngsters to consider getting involved in EU-supported projects. The participants consequently became aware of their own capacities for being active citizens, both at national and at European level, and for making their own impact on the economic environment.

For many of them this project was the first chance they had to experience this type of non-formal learning, and many came out of the training course determined to start their own business. So far, as a result of the project, at least three businesses have been created, in web design and software, in agro-tourism and in consultancy. ■

**'I loved the workshop about how to prepare a funding project because the information was not just theoretical; it was based on a detailed project.'**

**'I will use the information gained within the training course to open my own business.'**



## Youth in Action

**Youth in Action is the European Union programme** for all young people aged 15 to 28 (or in some cases 13 to 30). It enables more than 150 000 young people and youth workers every year to exercise non-formal learning mobility across the EU and in 140 countries beyond by getting involved in educational activities outside schools. With a budget of EUR 885 million for the period 2007–13, the programme helps young people to develop skills and fosters their active participation in society. It particularly promotes the inclusion of young people facing obstacles in their lives.

To achieve its objectives, the programme funds a wide variety of activities through five actions. The activities include exchanges, initiatives, democracy projects and a voluntary service. It also supports youth workers and youth organisations through training and networking, and promotes European cooperation in the youth field.

# Programme Actions

## ■ ACTION 1: Youth for Europe

Encourages young people's active citizenship, participation and entrepreneurship by supporting exchanges, initiatives and democracy projects.

## ■ ACTION 2: European Voluntary Service

Fosters young people's sense of solidarity and tolerance by voluntary activities abroad carried out for the benefit of local communities.

## ■ ACTION 3: Youth in the World

Promotes mutual understanding through exchanges and partnerships among young people and youth organisations across the world.

## ■ ACTION 4: Youth Support Systems

Helps youth workers and youth organisations improve the quality of their work.

## ■ ACTION 5: European cooperation in the youth field

Supports youth policy cooperation at European level, and facilitates dialogue between young people and policymakers.

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



## Youth in Action 2007—11

more than  
**725 000**  
participants:  
**541 000**  
young people and  
**184 000**  
youth workers;

**40 000**  
projects  
were selected to  
receive grants out of  
**82 000**  
applications submitted;

**27 000**  
project promoters a  
year: non-governmental  
organisations, informal  
groups of young people,  
municipalities.



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



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