

# NFE BOOK

The impact of Non Formal Education on  
young people and society





AEGEE (Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe) is one of Europe's largest interdisciplinary student associations, promoting a unified Europe, cross-border co-operation, communication, integration among students and striving to create an open and tolerant society of tomorrow. Founded in Paris in 1985, this year AEGEE enjoys 23rd years of its activity on the European NGO scene.

AEGEE is a non-governmental, non-profit organization, operating without being linked to any political party. A widely spread student Network of 15,000 members in more than 220 local branches, so-called antennae, provides the ideal platform where young people from over 40 European countries can work together, free from any national way of thinking.

AEGEE brings together European students of all study disciplines with activities such as international conferences, seminars, exchanges, training courses and case study trips where they analyze a broad variety of topics from a European point of view, and discuss them with different experts. The focus of the association lies within four main Fields of Action: Active Citizenship, Cultural Exchange, Higher Education and Peace and Stability. AEGEE operates without any national level of organization, and relies solely on the local branches and a European level that consists of Work-

ing Groups, Commissions, Project Teams and the Comité Directeur, the European Board of Directors.

Every year, AEGEE devotes itself to carrying out a project on a European-wide scale, the Flagship project. In 2006 our flagship topic was about "Democracy in Europe". Last year we were focusing on Education and Non-Formal Education, while this year we are organizing projects aiming to raise awareness about Sustainable Development.

AEGEE has been co-operating on a regular basis with the European Commission for implementing projects and has been consulted on topics related to education, in particularly the SOCRATES and TEMPUS program. AEGEE enjoys the Participatory Status in the Council of Europe, Operational Status at UNESCO and is a member of the European Youth Forum and European Movement International. Among the organisations' patrons are: Mikhael Gorbachev, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize; Václav Havel, Former President of the Czech Republic, Wolfgang Thierse – Former President of the German Parliament and Eric Froment - President of a European University Association.

Further information on [www.aegEE.org](http://www.aegEE.org).



„Education Unlimited!“ project aims to contribute to improvement of European higher education by strengthening involvement of young people in educational policies at the grass-root level and bridging formal and non-formal education in a more sustainable way. For reaching this aim the project brings Bologna process and concept of lifelong learning closer to young people, contributes to the acknowledgement of non-formal

education activities next to and by formal education system and encourages proactive approach of young people to the organisation of education, encouraging them to actively participate in discussing and implementing how they want education to be like. This book, together with many other activities all around Europe is part of the project.



Welcome to the book on Non-Formal Education!

It is a pleasure to welcome you through these pages. I don't know if you ever heard about Non-Formal Education and if you are acquainted with it. If it is not the case, don't worry and read the next pages. This book has been designed for you.

The concept of Non-Formal Education was a real discovery for me and a real eyes opener. I discovered it in 2006 when I came to Brussels for an internship and had constant contact with the Comité Directeur (European Board of AEGEE) at that time. These motivated people were working on Education and more specifically on Non-Formal Education. At that time, I was a new active member in the European dimension of AEGEE and I was not always aware of all what I learnt through Non-Formal Education.

AEGEE's internal Education events were always amazing events. I discovered new countries, new people and new friends and when I came back home, I had the head full of ideas and potential to develop. Coming from a very strict educational system, I finally discovered that Education could be interactive and fun and that it was not only about reading books and learning by heart but much more about knowing yourself and knowing the world. Being educated is a chance in life and this opportunity should be given to anyone in whichever from it suits them best.

Since its creation, AEGEE has influenced the life of thousands of young people. Our first project, Summer Universities, is one of the best examples. It was set up in order to allow young people to learn languages, being in the country with local people and having interactive languages courses made by students for students (peer-to-peer education).

Through the years, we made Non-Formal Education being our strength. We train people and help them to develop themselves and once they find their path, they give it back to the organization and invest their time in working on projects. The passion they developed is helping them in finding what they want to change in the world and AEGEE is helping them to realize it.

Of course, with Non-Formal Education, we all learnt a lot but it is obviously not enough and there is a need and a great importance of complementarity between formal and Non-Formal Education.

We can't learn everything by ourselves and we can't learn anything without experiencing it ourselves.

Laure Onidi  
President of AEGEE Europe

# Welcome words



It is a pleasure to welcome you to our Non Formal Education Book. This book is created with a lot of enthusiasm and willingness by young people for these young people who are doing their first steps in the magic world of Non Formal Education.

When we started thinking of the contents, the first thing that came to our minds was that we should definitely include personal stories of active young people who grew up thanks to NFE and their activities managed to influence part of our society.

Besides, you will have the chance to get an idea of the various existing definitions of NFE, as well as the main distinctions between the different types of education and the steps done towards the recognition of NFE. And last, but not least, to find out the meaning of a variety of terms that might have confused you or will confuse you in the future. For me personally, it was a dream to work on such a book and I am extremely happy that it is initiated by AEGEE: the organization that changed my life and showed me the way to participate and organize diverse projects, to travel all around Europe, to become active in my city, in my country, in Europe and to translate every single moment into a learning experience. Since its creation in 1985, AEGEE, like many other youth non-governmental organizations, is one of the main providers of non formal education in the youth field. It influenced the lives of thousands of young people all around Europe through numerous activities - trainings, seminars, conferences, Summer Universities, European Voluntary Service etc.

I compare NFE with a colorful child's windmill, like the one we used to play when we were kids and like the one in the cover page of our book. As the colorful winds of the windmill are connected to each other and start moving and producing sound and energy thanks to our blow, thus the non formal education connects different young people, full of energy and freshness of their age, who attain great achievements with the support of a trainer/coach/tutor.

I hope this book will serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for many young people and that the energy and breath of air of non formal education windmill will drive them to many unforgettable experiences.

Enjoy reading! Enjoy experiencing!

Maria Nomikou

Project manager of NFE Book

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# 1 CHAPTER

WHAT IS NON FORMAL EDUCATION?

Before going in to the deep of practices, stories, experiences we thought that we should give an idea of what Non Formal Education is as it is presented by different European Institutions and platforms. Non Formal Education has been a feature for political debates as it is not accepted by some southern European countries or it is not recognized with the same way in each country. Regardless the name it has been given, it is for sure an essential instrument of a life long learning.



# Differences between formal, non-formal and informal education

|                            | FORMAL<br>(intencional)          | NON-FORMAL<br>(intencional)               | INFORMAL<br>(functional –<br>unintentional)      |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| AIM                        | Yes                              | Yes                                       | No   |
| PLAN                       | Yes                              | Yes                                       | No   |
| PROCESS                    | Yes                              | Yes, flexible                             | No   |
| SPACE                      | Fixed                            | Important, but not fixed                  | Unimportant                                      |
| LEARNING                   | Conscious                        | (Un/sub)conscious                         | Unconscious                                      |
| TYPE OF LEARNING           | Information, knowledge           | Competences                               | Anything   |
| MISTAKES                   | Punished – classification        | Allowed, appreciate and being worked with | We learn through mistakes, „the more the better“ |
| AIMED AT                   | Individual                       | Individual and group                      | Individual                                       |
| RESULTS                    | Same of everyone                 | Similar                                   | Different  |
| RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESULTS | Educator                         | Participant, group, educator              | Individual                                       |
| GROUP-ROLE                 | Has influence, but not important | Very important                            | If exists, plays a role                          |
| GROUP-AGE                  | Peer                             | Inter-generational                        | Inter-generational                               |
| GROUP-INTERACTION          | Competition                      | Cooperation                               |  |
| PARTICIPATION              | Compulsory                       | Voluntary                                 | Automatic  |
| LEADER                     | Directive, set                   | Indirective support, setting              | None   |

The table is a result of two training courses “Formela Teoprax” - TC on non-formal education, and “Compass” - TC on human rights. Both training courses were run by the Czech National Agency of the Youth Programme. PROVIDED BY MONIKA NOVOSODOVA



# European Youth Forum and NFE



The European Youth Forum has drawn on the various definitions of formal, non-formal and informal learning elaborated by UNESCO, the European Commission and its member organisations and after much discussion has come to a consensus on the following common understanding: while formal education is typically provided by formal education institutions and is sequentially and hierarchically structured leading to certification, non-formal education is an organised educational process which takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to certification. Individuals participate on a voluntary basis and as a result, the individual takes an active role in the learning process. Unlike informal education where learning happens less consciously, the individual is usually aware of the fact that he/she is learning through non-formal education.

Non-formal education gives young people the possibility to develop their values, skills and competencies others than the ones developed in the framework of formal education. Those skills (also called 'soft skills') include a wide range of competencies such as interpersonal, team, organisational and conflict management, intercultural awareness, leadership, planning, organising, co-ordination and practical problem solving skills, teamwork, self-confidence, discipline and responsibility. What is special about non-formal education is that individuals, participants are the actors actively involved in the education/learning process. The methods that are being used aim at giving young people the tools to further develop their skills and attitudes. Learning is the ongoing process, one of its crucial features is learning by doing. "Non-formal" does not imply

unstructured, the process of non-formal learning is shared and designed in such a way that it creates an environment in which the learner is the architect of the skills development.

Non-formal learning on the other hand is a process that is different to non-formal education and therefore can happen in different settings and environments. Youth organisations offer non-formal learning through their programmes at the same time non-formal learning experiences can be organised within the work place. It is important to acknowledge that individual skills acquired through involvement with youth organisations are not only related to employment prospects, but they contribute to the development of human capabilities and motivations. Such skills contribute more directly to a general motivation for learning rather than to specific tasks and responsibilities related to personal development. There is a thin line between those learning experiences, nevertheless it is important to outline the specificities of learning provided through engagement in the youth organisations and their programmes.

## People First

If you want a year of prosperity, grow grain

If you want ten years of prosperity, grow trees

If you want a hundred years of prosperity, grow people.

The text is extracted from the policy papers on "Youth organisations as non-formal educators – recognising our role" and "Recognition of non-formal education: Confirming the real competencies".



Independently established by youth organisations, the European Youth Forum is made up of more than 90 National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations, which are federations of youth organisations in themselves. It brings together tens of millions of young people from all over Europe, organised in order to represent their common interests. Representation, internal democracy, independence, openness and inclusion are among the main principles for the functioning of the European Youth Forum and its Member Organisations.

# The Council of Europe way



“Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten” B. F. Skinner

Informal education refers to the lifelong process, whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from the educational influences and resources in his or her own environment and from daily experience (family, neighbours, marketplace, library, mass media, work, play, etc.).

Formal education refers to the structured education system that runs from primary school to university, and includes specialised programmes for technical and professional training.

Non-formal education refers to any planned programme of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competencies, outside the formal educational curriculum.

“learning [is]...a process that is not only related to the function of school or other organised educational settings. This conception of learning is based upon the idea and observation that a considerable number of our meaningful learning experiences happen outside the formal education system: in workplaces, families, different organisations and libraries...”

Dr. Pasi Sahlberg in Building Bridges for Learning - The Recognition and Value of Non-Formal Education in Youth Activity

Non-formal education as practised by many youth organisations and groups is :

- \* voluntary;
- \* accessible to everyone (ideally);
- \* an organised process with educational objectives;
- \* participatory and learner-centred;
- \* about learning life skills and preparing for active citizenship;
- \* based on involving both individual and group learning with a collective approach;
- \* holistic and process-oriented;
- \* based on experience and action, and starts from the needs of the participants.

Formal, non-formal and informal education are complementary and mutually reinforcing elements of a lifelong learning process. This manual has not been designed as a ‘course’ in HRE, and the individual activities can usefully be applied in very different contexts, in formal or less formal settings, and on a regular or irregular basis.

The text was extracted from the COMPASS-A manual on Human Rights Education with Young people

# European Union way



The need for lifelong and life-wide learning has revealed over the past few years that the necessary skills can be acquired through learning in formal, informal and non-formal contexts. Non-formal learning is typically undervalued as not being “real” learning.

What we learn in formal settings (schools, colleges, training centres etc) is only one part of acquiring skills. We learn in non-formal and informal settings too (e.g. in youth clubs, sports associations, within the family, in political life). Learning through civil society activities and in social environments is part of informal and non-formal learning, and takes place not just by chance, but also intentionally and in an organised way.

Young people take part in a wide range of activities outside mainstream education systems, and this too counts as non-formal learning. The youth sector has over the years gained experience in providing non-formal learning. At European level the Youth in Action programme is a good example of this work and the experience it can bring.

In the consultations with young people, non-formal learning was often seen as the most positive, efficient and attractive counterpart to a largely inefficient and unattractive system of formal education. The advantage of non-formal learning lies mainly in its voluntary and often self organised nature, its flexibility, the possibilities of

participation, the “right to make mistakes”, the closer link to young people’s interests and aspirations. Integrating disadvantaged young people was also seen as an asset of non-formal learning.

It is becoming more and more important to develop effective and flexible ways of recognising skills acquired outside formal education and training systems. Finding the right balance in a set of tools which guarantee appropriate and satisfying solutions for certification and recognition, in accordance with the development of quality standards, (self) evaluation and assessment procedures for non-formal learning will be a sensitive task. Non-formal learning should not lose its open character and turn into a formal structure by imitating the formal education system.

The consultation process highlighted a lack of understanding of the benefits of non-formal learning. It is thus necessary to strengthen the awareness of key persons and institutions in society, business and politics, of the main players (the social partners, NGOs, education experts etc.) and of young people themselves in order to promote non-formal education as an integral part of learning and education.

The text is extracted from the European Commission White Paper “A new impetus for European Youth”

*Formal learning is typically provided by an education or training institution and leads to certification. It is structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and is intentional from the learner’s perspective.*

*Non-formal learning is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, both structured and intentional. Informal learning is not provided by education and training institutions, does not lead to certification and is not structured. It is the result of daily activities. It may be intentional but in most cases it is not (i.e. incidental/random).*

## EU DEFINITION



# 2 CHAPTER

DEVELOPING COMPETENCES



# Personal development and competencies

Personal development refers to the improvement of one's own competencies. It is by no means limited to the traditional subjects of self-help literature, namely happiness and relationships, but encompasses all learning on all the possible areas we as individuals can learn on. The outcomes of personal development are self-improvement and personal growth with the purpose of realising one's higher potential, and admittedly, to thus become more successful and happier.

Conscious personal development builds on the idea of being happy with what you are and, at the same time, realising your high potential. It is about seeing your higher self – be that you being able to communicate better, being better in project management, knowing Finnish grammar, or getting a boy/girlfriend – and working consistently towards that goal. Personal development is also a subtle way of improving the world by developing yourself and helping your friends to grow.

## STEPS?

In a nutshell, the process of conscious personal development consists of three iterative steps: self awareness, goal setting and action. The first step, self awareness, is about becoming conscious of what you are. What do you know? What can you do? What are you good at? What are you not very good at? What are you happy and unhappy about yourself? What are your positive and negative behavioural patterns? What are your values?

The second phase, goal setting, means setting your development objectives. It is about knowing what you want to be and where you want to go. What competence do you need to develop? The goals of personal development can be from any fields of your life, be it

work, health, friends, love, self confidence or something else.

Finally, the two previous steps are worth nothing if their conclusions are not acted on. Be it through formal-, informal- or non-formal education or through self-help, growth and learning requires always energy and effort.

## What competencies?

So what are competencies? The ASK-model divides competencies into three categories of what we are, what we can do, and what we know – attitudes, skills and knowledge.

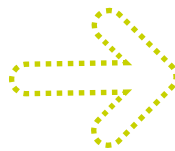
Knowledge (K) is the mental part of competencies and refers to the things you know. It is something that can be written on a piece of paper, such as theories, sequences and dependencies. You can, for example, know how sentences are structured in French, what a project description should contain, and that your mother will not be happy if your room is a mess.

The second category, skills (S), is concerned with the practical competencies. Skills are something you can do if you want it – by yourself or by using some-

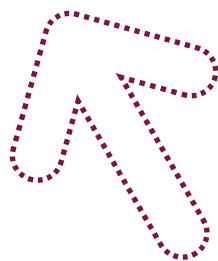
thing. It is the competence that is in your fingertips. You can have the skills of writing, speaking French, coaching, giving presentations and programming Java for example.

## The cycle of Personal Development

1. Self awareness



2. Goal setting



3. Action





The deepest levels of competencies, attitudes (A), are the competencies that are based on the way you are and on the way you behave. Your attitudes are the things you do naturally, your opinions, how you see and perceive things. They encompass your unconscious patterns of actions and your values. You can be a good listener, calm, honest, bossy and have a positive or negative attitude towards the person you are communicating with. Take a moment and make a list of all the different competencies you have. Are you able to categorise them as Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge?

**RELATION?**

Attitudes, skills and knowledge are not a hierarchical taxonomy nor are they directly linked. Taking language learning as an example: You can know all the most important Swedish words and remember all the grammar by heart (both knowledge), and still be unable to speak Swedish (skill) due to lack of practise. Alternatively, you can speak perfect Finnish (skill), but be unable to explain the rules of Finnish grammar (K) – which is often the case with native speakers.

Moreover, as attitudes often function on an unconscious level, a good listener (A) quite often is not aware of the listening skills they have.

Attitudes

What you are

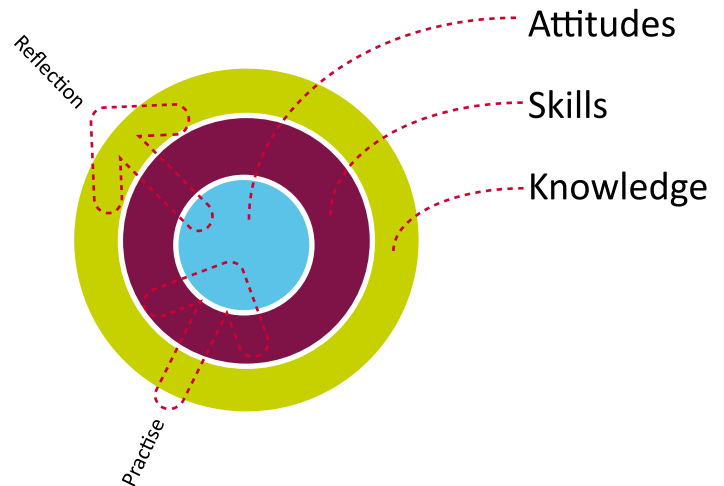
Skills

What you can do

Knowledge

What you know

**The ASK Model**



**PRACTISE AND REFLECTION**

There is, however, a connection between the A, S and K when it comes to learning. The connection works in both ways, from A to S to K and from K to S to A, using reflection and practise as its drivers.

Putting knowledge into practise can lead to learning a new skill. Similarly, practising a skill often enough can lead into a change in attitudes. For example, you could study the theories, tips and tricks involved with active listening, thus developing your knowledge on the topic. By putting this theory into practise, you can move on to developing your active listening skills. Finally, if you practise the skill of active listening enough, it can become a natural part of your behaviour making you an active listener (attitude).

Reflection works the other way around. If you are a good active listener (attitude), you can start to reflect on what you do when you are listening. How do you behave? Through this reflection you start discovering the skills you are unconsciously using. Further reflecting on the skills of active listening can lead into theory, tips and tricks on active listening, thus creating knowledge.



**WHICH COMES FIRST?**

Whether knowledge or skills are learned first depends much on the subject at hand and on the preferred learning or teaching style. At driving school you first learn traffic rules and what the different pedals do. Only after you have learned the theory, you are let to practise your driving skills. On the other hand, when you were learning to speak, you first practised the skill and only much later anybody tried to enlighten you on the concept of declinations (knowledge).

Attitudes, on the other hand, can be learned and developed only through practise. Given that attitudes are visible only through what we do. You must change your behaviour (through practising a skill) to develop your attitudes. It is impossible for you to become a good listener without doing anything; similarly, it does not really help you, if you just think about the rules of good listening. The only way for you to become a good listener is for you to practise your listening skills until you do them automatically.

One of the major strengths of non-formal education is that it stimulates the learners to use more than one of the learning styles. By doing this, non-formal education provides two important benefits over the formal education.

First, each participant gets to learn by using their preferred learning style. Just think of the agony of a person preferring hands-on learning, sitting in a theoretical lecture (or the other way around). By addressing all of the learning styles, non-formal education can keep more people interested and motivated than by just using one of the styles.

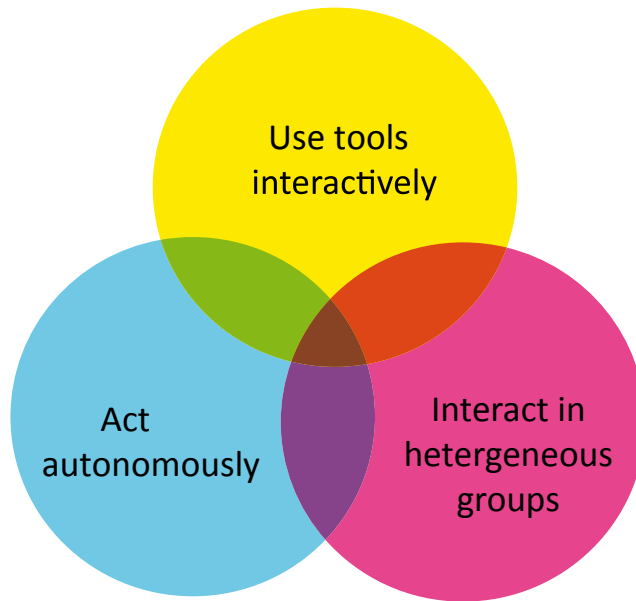
Secondly, the learning of every participant is enhanced by them us-

ing all of the learning styles. If you prefer learning by putting theories into practise, you will learn more if you every now and then stop, watch and observe what is going on.

**Which competencies?**

So, what competencies should you develop? The necessary ASKs can be defined in two groups. Firstly the core competencies necessary for almost every human being, and secondly the ASKs relevant for each individual's personal goals.

**OECD Key Competencies**



**KEY COMPETENCIES**

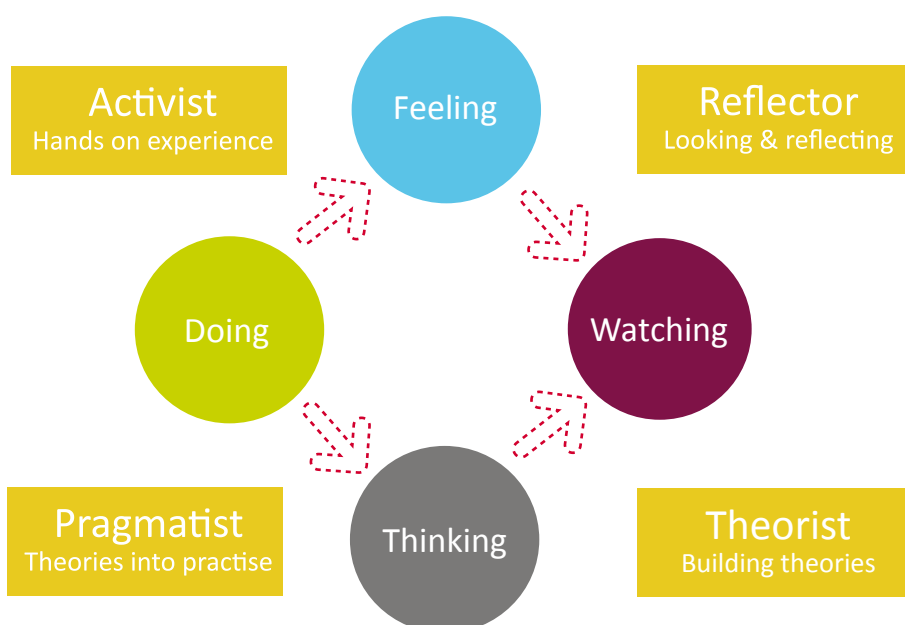
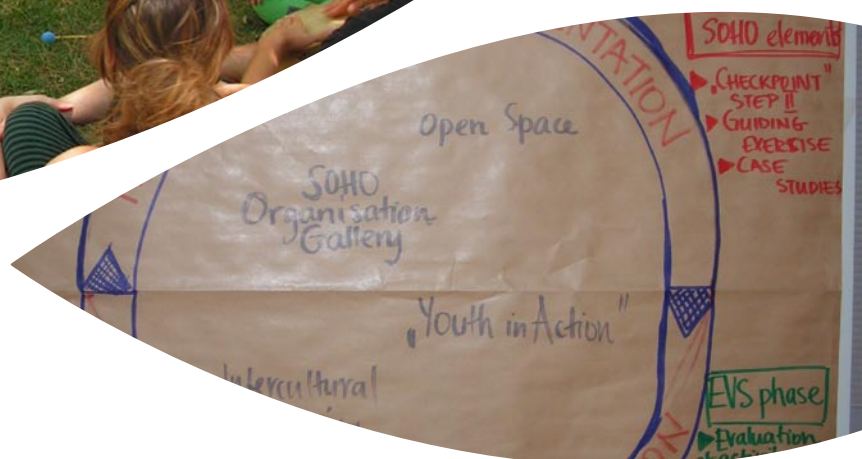
A number of organisations have tried to define the core competencies that are essential for every individual's personal and social development. The OECD's conceptual framework of key competencies classifies the required ASKs into three categories, with each category including a number of different attitudes, skills and knowledge. First, you need to be able to master the use of tools interactively. This in short means

being able to use language (communication), symbols (mathematics) and technology, as well as knowledge and information interactively.

Secondly, you need to be able to interact well with heterogeneous groups. To do that you have to be able to relate well to others, cooperate and work in teams, and to manage and resolve conflicts.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you need to be able to act autonomously – something we call personal leadership. This means understanding and considering the big picture; forming and conducting life plans and personal projects; and having the ability to assert rights, interests, limits and needs.





### PERSONAL COMPETENCIES

In addition to the key competencies we of course need many other ASKs. The palet of necessary competencies depends on your personal goals and can be developed through personal development. Reflection skills and reflective attitude has an important role in the development process. Through reflection one can apply, relate and adapt existing ASKs to new uses as well as develop new competencies. Which attitudes, skills and knowledge do you need to focus on developing next?

### Why non-formal learning?

Non-formal education has numerous advantages in personal development in comparison to traditional formal education. Formal education tends to have a bias towards certain competencies and certain learning styles.

It seems that formal education, especially higher education, focuses on the learning of knowledge. Practise of skills is done less than studying knowledge, and by the time when we have reached university, the amount of attitudinal learning is often almost non-existent. Non-formal education, on the other hand, is often much more based on skills and also has attitude-based learning objectives. Tolerance is an example of an attitude that is often developed using non-formal education. Practitioners of non-formal education

should not, however, forget the important knowledge element just because formal education seems to prefer it.

### LEARNING STYLES

We all have a preference regarding how to collect and process information about the world. We want to experiment by doing or reflect by watching; and at the same time, experience through feelings or theorise through thinking. Depending on our choices, we prefer one of the four learning styles: looking and reflecting (reflector), building theories (theorist), putting theories into practise (pragmatist) or doing hands on experiments (activist). What is your preference?

Due to these natural tendencies, we learn best when using our preferred learning style and worst when using the opposite one. At the same time, however, we learn far better if we use all of the four learning styles – by accomplishing a full learning cycle. It does not matter which part of the cycle we start from, as long as we move through all of the four steps in a logical procession.



**Tapio Schrey** Last year's student interested in management, consulting and training. Through his work at the European Youth Parliament Tapio has worked with, facilitated and trained more than 40 teams of young people all around the Europe.

# From practice to theory and back and back



It was soft and warm. I never gave a thought when I was stuck into it. I was seven. I took a ride and fully enjoyed for next seven - nine years. Then first evil thoughts arrived. Who am I? What am I? What am I doing and where am I going? Evil seeds of self-awareness. With that I took a closer look into what was that soft and warm shell of fun, activities and learning all the cool stuff. The learning process of non-formal education in my local youth NGO became clear to me for the first time. I was drinking it living it, gaining from it for many years, but not really realising what was behind it. The masks fall down, behind lovely trips, playing, creating and learning, there were well-structured schemes, planning, supervised learning by doing and self-evaluation process. Wow, I plunged well into it and find thing a bit more boring, but still self-rewarding. Learning more, taking courses, seminars, trainings and giving it back to young people coming to just have fun. Shaping evil plans how we will teach them all this things without them even realising it. Getting all rewards in smiles, muddy shorts and fun while having it. That was what scouting back then gave me.

It all started low and slow. Being involved in a youth NGO was first just a normal progress from years and years of benefiting from the activities of the same NGO. It just suited me, with my wish to learn and progress the doors for that were always opening. To gain knowledge on organisation skills, leading the team and capacity to adapt to new situations and working environments was easy already on the local level. With progress on regional, national and international those competences deepened and became broader. An important factor in my learning process were numbered opportunities to see and explore international environment and find out about how things are done abroad. With that I gained to crucial ingredients in order to keep me going and going. First was an opportunity to learn more about almost what ever I deemed interesting or useful and find a deep knowledge on the filed of non formal education, no matter whether it was intercultural learning, training of trainers or ways how to found a NGO. Secondly it was an opportunity to enjoy new friends, new challenges and created working and learning events that suited me. Seeing the overall picture and been able to contribute to it, that was the rewarding path.

As I took this path all the way down I got myself involved in YFJ, which again enabled me to raise my work and trough that my

learning process on a completely different level. Now self-awareness is not about me and my social circle it's about youth and need of youth in Europe, it is finding the aims that are worth fighting for in the world we are living. Non-Formal Education is defined by the European Youth Forum as: "non-formal education is an organised educational process which takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to certification. Individuals participate on a voluntary basis and as a result, the individual takes an active role in the learning process. Unlike informal learning where learning happens less consciously, the individual is usually aware of the fact that he/she is learning through non-formal education. More or less consciously I drifted trough my phases of non-formal education, to the day when writing, thinking and re-thing of NFE policies, shaping it and promoting it is part of my non-formal education. That's the special value of it, from meadows full of scouts to buildings in Brussels the same process applies and it's priceless. There are few things I learned in my formal education, but we should never allow that schooling would interfere too much with our learning as famous quote claims. The ones gained trough non-formal processes are much more applicable to the life I lead as this is the path I am following since the care-less days in shorts. Doing things for non-formal education, while still gaining a lot from the same process, that's the beauty of it. Always referring and coming back to practice, trying to see, what would be useful to have on different crossroads of live, in different NGO's in different platforms. The process of recognition of NFE is one of the most hottest topic now days and again we should ask the same question all over again; "what is the best way of recognition for young users of NFE, those who hardly know what's going on, but still without doubt are getting the skills and values trough it." Recognition should start from that and provide fruits for users, and those individuals and organisations, who are providing it for others, while still being the beneficiaters of the same process.

Someday my times in youth NGO will come to an end, but I will take big bag of knowledge, skills and maybe most importantly values to the next fields and circles, still following the same principles in different environments. At the same time, the process will be going on. NFE is and will be a soft shell around me. Learning by doing is a concept applicable to writing the European youth policies and shaping the political face of European youth platform as to many, many others, who are trying to hide it. As knowing is not enough, we must do to be actively in charge of our lives, that's where NFE is getting the lights and applauses. To many more!



*Tine Radinja is studying Philosophy in the University of Ljubljana. He has been Vice President of the National Youth Council of Slovenia. At the moment, he is bureau member of the European Youth Forum responsible for Training and Youth Work Development in SEE.*



The World Organization of the Scout Movement is a worldwide, non-profit and non-partisan organisation of 28 millions members, male and female, operating through a network of local groups supported by National Scout Organizations in 156 countries. Scouting movement is leading youth force around the world, based on mission of Scout movement to build a better world through specific value system based on education of young people. For more information check the <http://www.scout.org/>

# WORTH TO KNOW

# Unlimited Encounters



Since its founding in 1987, the European Youth Parliament (EYP) has established itself as a unique educational project for young Europeans. The EYP experience is a stimulating, collective learning process. Most people embarking on their very first journey into this vivid world do so by taking part in a simulated session of the European Parliament. In a session people from a multitude of different backgrounds come together to form a Committee in which they discuss contemporary real-life issues.

Pushing social and cultural borders is elemental from the very beginning. Individuals entirely new to each other go through a grouping period aiming to form a cohesive team with the assistance of experienced trainers, team-builders and the Committee Chair. During the numerous stages of Committee Work the members are encouraged to share their ideas and opinions on the topic without artificial political roles and restrictions that often distort the free development of ideas. One of the fundamental advantages of the model is its ability to provide a sincere and truly open learning space without the constraints that most conventional methods of formal education suffer from.

One of the main principles of Committee Work is the concept of unanimity. Reaching a common understanding about the aims and solutions is an essential part of the learning process. No voting is conducted as the aim is to produce a resolution which everyone can support and agree on. These resolutions are presented in the General Assembly which is an outstanding point of trial to the group at the pinnacle of its development. The plenary also serves as an ideal phase for reflecting on the past process as a whole and identifying its most feasible outcomes. Peer evaluation is a substantial part of every step along the way, complementing the process of experiential learning.

In EYP learning is fundamentally based on direct experience. Not only does this allow young people to develop their ability to express their opinions, but to compromise, find agreements through communication and make decisions. Discussing complex matters and reaching for consensus in a diverse, multicultural milieu stimulates the participants to apply and improve their decision making competence in an encouraging and supportive environment. From the initial development phases of group dynamics to standing up

for the commonly forged positions in the heat of the debate, the interaction takes place in a truly engaging and inspiring atmosphere. The learning process is to a great extent based on this unique atmosphere which allows this highly experiential form of learning to rise above the boundaries of traditional pedagogy.

The learning process, however, extends far beyond the timeline of a single session. Organizing events, training intercultural groups, working in a Media Team or on a pan-European think tank project - the EYP experience has a plethora of possibilities to offer. To me, my participation in this project has granted possibilities to further develop competencies such as people management and efficient group facilitation to an extent unreachable by formal methods. These skills have been proven decisive especially in coordinating large amounts of volunteers in projects as well as in the academia.

Through Non-formal Learning I have undoubtedly been able to aspire to higher achievement and explore new heights of contribution.



*Simo Suoheimo has been active in the European Youth Parliament since 2004. In addition to Committee Chair experience in the EYP, he has a strong background in group facilitation and training through working in numerous NGOs and Volunteer Projects.*

# Bienvenue au monde de la jeunesse active\*



Once upon a time, there was an infertile village. No trees or flowers existed. Merely some weeds grew on the mountains. In the meantime, its inhabitants were only complaining; but never tried to take any actions to end this.

One day, a woman scientist visited the village. She was surprised with the extent of infertility and asked the peasants the reason. Grievance about the nature was their answer. She decided to offer them some solutions and found out the most suitable plants for that type of soil, which were a few kinds of herbs. With the help of the peasants, she implanted these seeds all around. Before leaving, she taught them how to take care of these.

Forests welcomed her, when she stopped over in the village 20 years later. The village was dressed in all tones of green as well as flowers in all colours of the rainbow. Moreover, the passive smell had left the atmosphere; the faces she met were shining with happiness. Their words were enthusiastic and emphasising "activeness". They told her that herbs nourished the soil. Thus, it was time to plant trees and soon, the village was surrounded by forests. They thanked her for her influence and for motivating them to get into action and added that currently there were many youngsters studying Agricultural Engineering.

On 3rd August 2007, 30 participants from all around the Council of Europe (CoE) countries met in the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg, where they were going to live together for a month, mainly for improving their level of French. However, from the very beginning, they recognized that after this month nothing would stay the same in their lives, because in the first day, the Intercultural French Course planted the seeds of prospective active young people.

The CoE Directorate of Youth and Sport has been organising Intercultural Language Courses (ILC) in different countries since 1985 in order to encourage members of youth organisations to become more active in international youth work by promoting intercultural dialogue, international understanding and improving their language and communication skills in the context of European youth work. These courses develop an interest in other areas than just language and combine also history, politics, culture, ideology, geography, religion and everyday life in another country. The methodology comprises classroom sessions, workshops, visit programmes,

implementation rounds and individual studies. Thus, with a combination of several non-formal education methods, the participants not only further their level of languages, but also develop new competences.

The Intercultural French Course (IFC) 2007 was also built with the aforementioned aims and methodology. The participants had different levels of French and experience in youth work. Some of them knew French well, but lacked experience, while the rest were keen on youth work with a very little knowledge of French. Also, they came from various cultures. Moreover, the language professors and the Portuguese trainer were all from different backgrounds. Such a variety was not easy to adapt to, however, in the end, it was hard to leave the harmony of diversity.

The course took place in between 3 August- 1 September 2007 and included French lessons, workshops, games, simulations, country and NGO fairs, cultural visits, sessions on the culture and history of the Alsace-Lauren region. Experience and knowledge sharing enriched this learning process. At the end of the month, the participants not only improved their language skills, but also discovered more about themselves and other cultures, set among their priorities to be further involved in the youth work, gained motivation and enthusiasm to become active citizens. In other words, coming to the last days of the course, the seeds of an empowered youth were budding...

Languages are not independent from the cultures that are using them. However, the Intercultural French Course was not unique because the participants acquired French in France; its more prominent advantage was the non-formal education methods it employed.

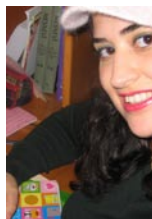
Carrying the learning process outside school as well as combining it with the domestic culture provided a precious medium for personal development and resulted in permanent learning. For example, during the weekend they spent in a chalet, by cooking their national foods, they realized how varied European cuisines were. On the other hand, a Ukrainian participant moved to France to improve her level of French, while began working in a youth NGO. Furthermore, these methods gave the participants the possibility to enlarge their understanding of youth work in addition to building new partnerships. Sustaining the close relations is a proof of this.

As a result of the course, the participants “fertilized their soil”, and learned how to plant trees to have dense forests in future. In the meantime; they explored more about their identities and dreams

for tomorrow. Some met nonformal education concepts for the first time. Some experienced cultures from far-away. For them, learning just began, and it will be a life-long one...

Pay attention to your environment. Young trees are growing...

In other words, “Bienvenue au Monde de la Jeunesse Active”...  
« \* Welcome to the World of Active Youth »



**Gülece Şenel** 22 years old and has been an AEGEE-Ankara member for 3 years. She studies Conflict Resolution. Moreover, she is the manager of “Understanding Europe” Project, and “Noah’s Ark”, both aiming to train high school students as active citizens.



The intercultural language courses for youth leaders and youth workers are organized every summer by the Council of Europe and combine language learning with a non formal education methodology and intercultural learning, which are as needed as the language itself when meeting other cultures, traditions, countries.

The courses are addressed to youth leaders and youth workers aged between 18 and 30 actively involved in a youth organization, network or authority preferably in the European or international level. For more information check the website of the council of Europe [www.coe.int/youth](http://www.coe.int/youth)

# WORTH TO KNOW

# International Youth Exchanges



When I was invited to write a small article about my personal experience in youth work and Non Formal Education (NFE) I found it interesting and thought that it was an easy and simple thing to do based on the fact that is what I have doing it as my full time occupation for the last years of my life, but now I realize that you can approach it from so many different angles and it touches many points thus it is not as easy as I first thought! But I will present some reflections on my personal experience while participating and organizing International Youth Exchanges (IYE).

One of the main reasons that lead me to present IYE as an example of an activity based on NFE is because of the intense learning process that the entire group passes through when participating in such activities. It continues to be amazing for me how much people can learn and experience in such a small period of time.

In general IYE are events that gather 20 up to 60 youngsters coming from many different countries to explore and exchange their visions and knowledge on certain topics that are relevant to all the society and young people in particular. The topics are quite diverse, from Climate Change to Conflict Resolution, Arts to Global Citizenship, passing through Human rights and Culture of Peace and it goes on and on. But one thing you can always find in common in all exchanges independently of the chosen theme that there will be the intercultural learning dimension, where the space for the participants is created for them to discover the differences and similarities among cultures, to stimulate the curiosity of the other and the respect for the diversity.

During a period that usually not passes the 8-10 days, the group passes through different phases of their learning process. Initially using several dynamics and exercises (ice-breakers, getting to know each other, group building exercises, etc) we create in the group a "comfort" zone that we can consider as the first stage and usually corresponds to the first days of the exchange. When the group starts to get to know each other better we pass to the stage where the group overcomes come this zone and enters to a "challenge" zone that will allow in reality for the group to really get deeper into the topic discussions. From then on we start to have the confrontation of different points of view on the discussion and we start to face our own pre concept ideas, stereotypes and prejudices. This

stage of the process is fundamental since only from here where we face and start to realize how things can have different interpretations and not always our is the right one or even that one cannot say that there is a right or wrong point of view in many situations. Only after the participants start this process of confrontation they will be able to start to understand the other and how our own ideas are constructed inside ourselves, we can say that we are now passing a process of "deconstruction" of our own realities. Now we have all condition gathered to start the final stage...time to reconstruct! Is the time where we are able to develop our understanding of things but on an enlarged vision.

During the last days of the activities many times the participants develop their own action plans where they set the actions they want to develop when they return to their communities and organizations. The group of participants usually will also define a concrete action to develop where the exchange took place to demonstrate to the local community that the group of youngsters coming from so many different countries around Europe were not only doing strange games but they were learning a lot about each other culture and also on the way realizing many things about their own cultures, and in the end about themselves as individuals. Is the space where we share our experience and learning with the local community.

Now is time to say goodbye to the new friends we have made, with some tears on the way and to the return home!

"...how difficult is to explain to friends and family what I have lived!! ...How is it possible that I have learned so much in not much more than one week? ... strange how I see some things with different eyes now!!!" – these are often feedbacks received from participants after experiencing an exchange activity.



Another thing that continues to surprise me is that I see people gaining in terms of competences from these experiences. Some of these competences can be seen in a quite obvious way and are now really starting to get promoted and recognized in some field of the society, such as the labor market. The communications skills, the ability to work and feel comfortable when working in multi-cultural teams and environments, the confidence and leadership competences, are some among many others that participants develop along the process when being exposed to the several challenges that they need to overcome during an IYE. But there are other important aspects that we develop in ourselves during an exchange and that are not always, let's say so easily visible or having the proper recognition, but are the fundamental ones when we talk about the development of better citizens and more fair and human societies. The values such as cooperation - being able work together overcoming our differences; understanding – being open and recognizing that the others perspectives can be as valid as my own; respect and recognizing the added value of what is difference can bring to me; solidarity – being concern and feeling responsible for what surrounds us and for the changes we want to create inside ourselves, in our group, community, society and in the world; are some of the core values that are promoted inside youth exchanges.

Quite recently I had a meeting with the board of a local youth organization where I'm living and at that moment I had another confirmation how international youth exchanges are an important way to give competences to young people and also to encourage them to have a more active role in society. Because from that group of youngsters 4 out of 5 started to get actively involved in youth work immediately after returning from an international youth exchange, nowadays they are organizing local activities that reach hundreds of youngsters every year.

On a personal level I can say that NFE have without doubt changed my life. It changed the way I see the world and my role in it. Today, even more that some years ago when I left the formal education system, I see young people with a very negative perspective when talking about their future, is the lack of employment, the lack of personal satisfaction when many of their ambitions and dreams get frustrated when trying to find opportunities or even just to be

recognized in the world of the "grow up" people. And now when looking back, to this not so distance period, I see that due to the competences I develop trough NFE activities, I got better prepared for many of the challenges and obstacles I had to face and will face in my future. The ability to work with different groups of people, the confidence I have developed on myself among so many other skills I developed trough NFE allows me today to really say and feel that my future is on my own hands. And this I found one of the most fundamental things that one can develop trough NFE. We are able to stop having a defeated attitude and to start an attitude of pro-active, of creation, where we can be able to create from an occupation, an enterprise, to a movement of change in society.



*Bruno Miguel Cavaco António is Secretary General of the international non governmental youth organization Youth for Exchange and Understanding, he is also a member of Pool of Traingers of Portuguese National Youth Council .*



# My journey with non-formal education



If someone had told me fifteen years ago that I would leave my American village and after spending five years in France, end up living in Brussels and sharing my life with a Polish woman, I would have never believed them! My life changed in ways I could not have dreamed of because of long and short term non-formal education experiences. Although they may have varied widely in format and in overall learning objectives, the learning processes were unified by their foundation in experiential learning. When I look back at them together, I see many advantages of non-formal education versus formal education and even the necessity of applying non-formal education methodologies in the development of competences such as intercultural sensitivity.

When I was seventeen, I left home for the first time on an intercultural youth exchange to France with AFS, whose primary method of promoting peace and tolerance consists of sending young people abroad on long-term cultural immersion exchanges. While living in a volunteer French family and attending high school, I was encouraged to leave my own culture and language behind and adapt to and later integrate into French culture. The educational process included vicissitudes of excitement and enthusiasm on one hand and on the other, internal conflict and irritability in the presence of the difficulties of adapting to another culture. Guiding this process were periodic educational events with all the exchange students of the region. The friendships I developed with my peers cultivated interactions in and around those events that were vital in helping me exteriorise, put into context and begin to understand my own development. Upon returning home to the US, I underwent a process of reintegrating my home culture into my new 'French' identity. Framing the entire experience were different preparatory and follow-up activities which, drawing upon the experience of the exchange and upon non-formal education methods, worked to further my intercultural sensitivity. My identity and perception of the world were reshaped and my competence in intercultural sensitivity was increased.

Several years later, I moved back to France, became a volunteer with AFS and eventually attended my first European youth event. The week-long training employed diverse non-formal education methods which fostered the exploration and development of several topics and skills related to global education, project manage-

ment and intercultural learning. The intensity of the educational process I went through reflected in many ways the one I had lived years before in France: excitement in the face of new challenges, crisis upon confronting their difficulty and then gradual adaptation. The short event made me more self-aware and proved to be a powerful catalyst for further developing my competence in intercultural sensitivity. Armed with this new awareness, I sought out similar training opportunities to explore and develop my competences. Despite the distinctness of these two types of experiences, they both reveal the advantages of the philosophy of the non-formal education they were rooted in. I learned through experience and at my own pace, met with intense real-world challenges, received what I needed when I needed it and was supported by both peers and mentors. Non-formal education methods adapt to the needs of its participants and allow them to steer the direction of their own learning. I have since studied much about intercultural theory, but no book or classroom could ever teach me competence in intercultural sensitivity. The challenges and crises followed by adaptation and practical experience which led to developing this competence had to be based in the real world, not in the conceptual.

Dissecting my life to find the influence of non-formal education proves to be a challenge in itself. However, of all the competences I have gained, perhaps intercultural sensitivity has had the biggest impact. Professionally, I owe to this competence the ability to work in multicultural teams, to communicate effectively (in different languages) and to manage multinational projects. As for my personal life, well, let's say that I continue to enrich my intercultural sensitivity every day.



*Brian Arnold studied at Ohio Wesleyan University and then completed his studies in Marseille and in Brussels. He volunteers on the national board of AFS Vivre Sans Frontière (France) and is an active trainer for the European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL).*

# Spiral learning



“...If he [teacher] is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.” Kahlil Gibran, “Prophet”

My first Non Formal Educational activity was one of the worst activities one can imagine and I almost got convinced that all this is unserious waste of my time which will give me nothing – this is what I was thinking right after the event. It was an exchange for 21 days, where we had no clue what to do, the organization of the event was horrible, there was no agenda, no trainers, no aim, no guidance, the participants were all inert, too different from me, the group I was with was even worse. After a long time, I realized that this activity gave me more food for growth as activist, organizer, citizen, leader, trainer, independent thinker than any other moment where I learnt.

I would start this article by saying that it is a nice opportunity to sit and reflect again on issues which seem to me so obvious and so true, but once you sit down to pass this knowledge to others it becomes much more difficult, since it is hard to pass on something which encompasses both thoughts and emotions, knowledge and values, attitudes and behavior. It is hard to pass on the process of acquiring experience in its broad sense. Experience which is hard to locate in one box of your competences for life, experience which is like a universal tool, which can be used in a wide variety of your social, public, private, professional and all your other lives... Experience which has knowledge, feelings, sensations, behaviors, and much more, which can not be named yet. Experience which brings you to maturity, when you know what to do with what happened to you (as A. Huxley was saying). How you do what you do with your experience is absolutely up to you. You chose how to learn to learn, based on how you like to learn to learn. So, welcome to the world of non formal life long learning journey...

When we talk about maturity, here are my thoughts. When we are talking about a person’s maturity we do not only talk about knowledge, I would even say we are talking about the actual knowledge the least. We always talk about mature feelings, mature behavior and attitudes, set of values, system of thoughts and opinions. Knowledge surely has its role and a huge role, but all the rest is helping us realize what we do with that knowledge. For me the non

formal education actually became the guide of what to do with the knowledge I had and showed how to make the knowledge more and multiply it to others. This is what happened to me, when I entered the youth work and youth field. I am a psychologist and also a public administrator. The formal system gave me all possible competences which were basic and essential for a person taking a professional role in the society, but all this would have stayed on a quite theoretical level, if I did not complement it with the resources found in the non formal educational sphere.

There are a number of moments which could be reflected upon in this article but I would like to concentrate on the ones which have played the greatest role in my professional development and development as a good citizen of a society. I will simply name them for you:

NFE is respecting diversity, inclusion, humanism, each persons role in shaping something great; it is for all ages, all interests, all colors; it works with all your senses; it helps you value your peers and teammates, since they are a huge source for learning and development.

While reflecting on the issues of value of non-formal education, I looked at it through different cycles of David Kolb (experiencing, reflecting, generalizing, applying) you go through during a learning process in non formal education and saw again how open it is, how inclusive it is, and how much freedom it gives you to express yourself, discuss your ideas, try them out and make your opinions. During each of these stages you are given a chance to acquire something special: you learn how to take any challenges and turn into a knowledge, you get a chance to “see” what you really feel and how you deal with that; at another moment you are given space and time to think all these over, map it in your mind and soul, open questions and not feel threatened when not all the questions are answered at once; at another point you are given the freedom to find links and put thing into a bigger picture; at some other point time comes to act! I was quite lucky to find this type of learning, since it made me work better, be better friend, organizer, even made me batter “have fun-er”.

I think this was one of the main reasons they I got my job within the Center for organizing Youth Activities in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs in Armenia. I got to know my boss through educational activities. He knew I had been traveling and had gained a lot of experience in international projects as well, and he offered me to become his adviser on international issues and projects, since he knew that the competence and experience I had gained through my life as young active person would be a great asset to the team which was already working in the ministry. Here I can truly implement number of my ideas and the trust which is put in us gives me all the freedom to act and make he changes beneficiary for our country and for the youth specifically. We go on learning... It should always be remembered that even when your competence and development get recognized and valued, the learning cycle never stops it is more like a spiral, which is always open in the other end – it is a life long process. It is amazing to see that more you learn, more experience you acquire, more sources of development you find. When you are in school you learn from books and teachers, when you are in university you learn from professors and your own work, when you are learning during your whole life, the possibility

of which is given by non formal education, you start learning from the people you work with, you see on the streets, from processes inside the groups you belong to. At last, you learn from yourself...

[...] self is a sea boundless and measureless.

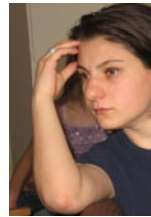
Say not, "I have found the truth," but rather, "I have found a truth."

Say not, "I have found the path of the soul."

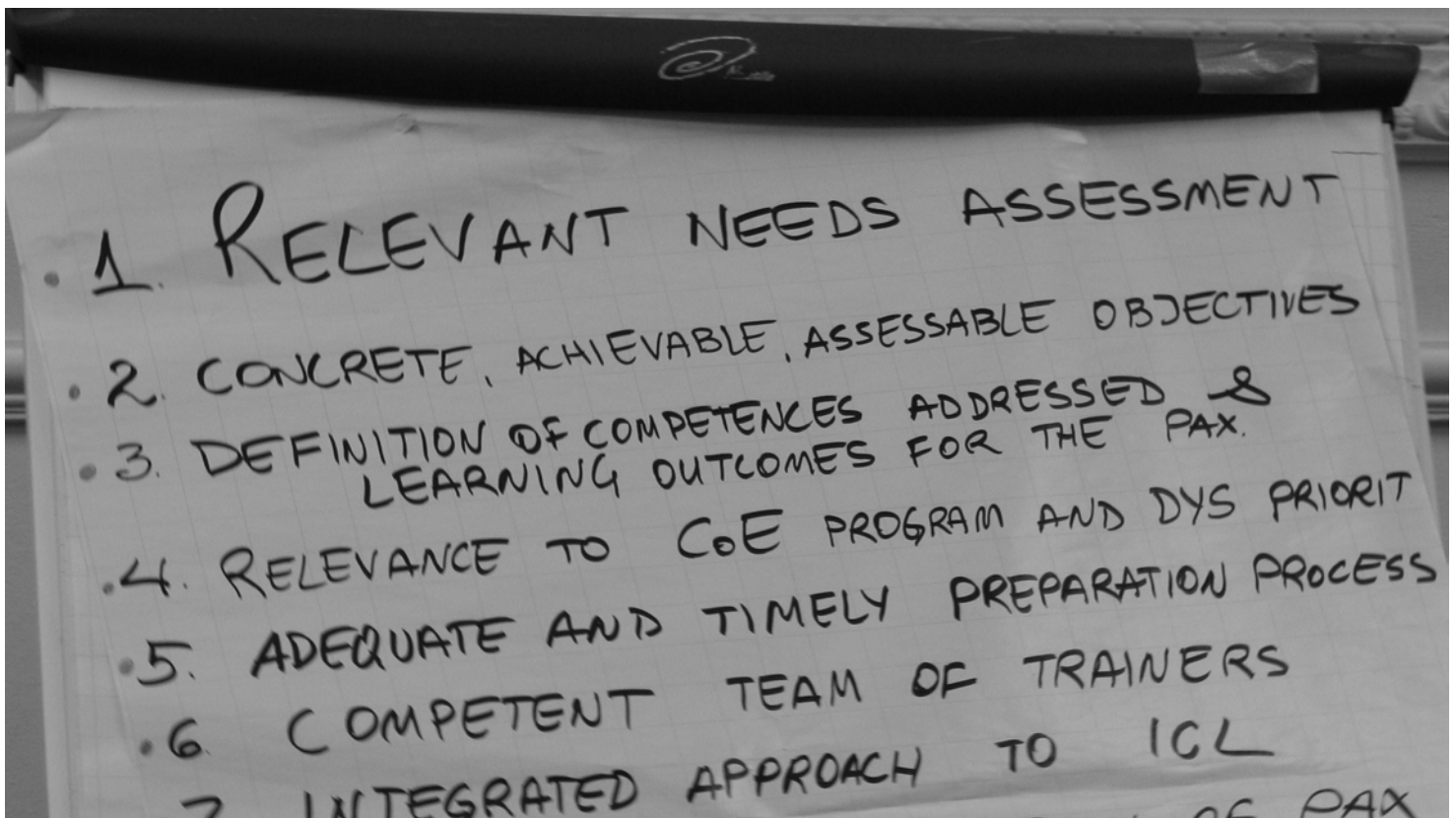
Say rather, "I have met the soul walking upon my path."

For the soul walks upon all paths. [...]

The soul unfolds itself, like a lotus of countless petals.]



*Zara Lavchyan is currently member of the pools of trainers of the Council of Europe and YFJ. Has been involved in youth work since 2000. She is a psychologist by profession and is now working on her PhD research on using trainings to raise performance quality in civil*



The pool of trainers of the European Youth Forum (YFJ) was established in 1998 and its aim is to act as a resource for the member organizations of the YFJ if they for example need a particular trainer for one of their courses, to provide strategic advice and develop methodologies for YFJ activities and participate in Council of Europe and European Union training courses and working groups on the development of training tools. The POT consists of 40 experienced trainers, facilitators, youth workers and policy experts coming from all over Europe. All members of the POT are under the age of 35, are actively involved with member organizations of the European Youth Forum and have skills and expertise in a variety of different fields of youth work. For more information check the website of the YFJ [www.youthforum.org](http://www.youthforum.org)

# WORTH TO KNOW

# The journey of a dream



I never traveled before and I really wanted to have such an experience. I had a dream. I wanted to visit Europe. I wanted to change my life. One woman in Egypt gave me the solution. I could go to work in Greece. That's all the information I had. I paid quite some money for my ticket, the insurance, the visa but I was sure about my decision and I wanted it so much that I could give everything I had for it.

The day I was impatiently waiting for arrived but soon I discovered that something wrong was going on. As I couldn't speak any other language except of Arabic I couldn't understand what the problem was, but I was able to feel it. When they brought me a translator I got to know that the reason I came to Greece was the European Voluntary Service. I didn't know what I was going to do or learn in the EVS. I didn't even know what the EVS is as the organization in Egypt never told me about it or my rights and responsibilities in it. It seems these people were using this program just for earning money...

In the beginning, I was very sad because I didn't know what I was supposed to do and if the organization will still keep me in Greece or send me back. They gave me this great opportunity but still I was a bit sad as I couldn't speak the language, I couldn't understand anything and it was difficult to communicate and make friends.

The truth is that I was not lucky at all with my sending organization but I was extremely lucky with my hosting organization. Besides the difficulties of the first weeks, my sadness was slowly going away. I left my family in Egypt and I found my family in Greece. People were so kind with me, they helped with everything and they did their best to communicate with me and teach me as many things as they could.

They taught me the work, they offered me language courses of English and Greek and they made me understand the importance of our project. All our efforts were for poor people of developing countries. Each small thing I was doing in Greece had an impact even in small villages of Africa, Asia or Latin America and this was making me feel good. In all countries there are poor people and each one of us, it doesn't matter from where we are coming from and if we are rich or not we can and we should help.

During my EVS, I had several hard moments. The cultural and religious differences are big and although I had amazing support from the people in the organization, there were few moments that people were not treating me well. Although I was legal in the country there were moments that I was taken to the police station just because I look different. In these difficult situations, I was lucky to have my mentor always next to me. She was helping me from the first day of my project. She never left me alone, she was always fighting for my rights and she was keeping telling me that every problem is an experience that will make me stronger.

The EVS project has the right system to support the volunteers. The people, the seminars, the National Agency, everything is there for the benefit of us. I remember the seminars that the National Agency of Youth in Action Program organized. Full of nice people from so many different countries, full of colours, funny activities, information, exchange of experiences...I could understand everything as my mentor had invited a translator for me, but still I was expressing more by writing, playing or drawing than speaking.

Finally, I learned how to communicate with people, how to present our work, how to protect myself. I became stronger and patient and did my best to get to know new people and make real friends. Although we have different religion, I felt at the end that we are the same. The people around me didn't discriminate me and never made me feel we are different. I managed to adapt to a new culture without changing my beliefs. I continue being religious and I do all the traditional things I used to do. For example, when I came to Greece I didn't know what I can eat so I was not eating almost anything. With the support of the people here, I learned how to ask for the food I can eat, I found some Egyptian restaurants and markets and often I was sharing my meals with my friends.



Closing this article I want to recommend to all young people to become volunteers and to travel as much as they can without fear, having in mind always that they should be careful as except of great people like the ones I met in my EVS, there are also people who want only their personal benefit.



*Said Hassan Nasr Mousa is a 25 years old young volunteer from Egypt. He finished school and the army in his country and he went to Greece for European Voluntary Service.*



The European Voluntary Service (EVS) provides young Europeans aged between 18 and 30 with the unique chance to express their personal commitment through unpaid and full-time voluntary activities in a foreign country within or outside the EU for a period of two to twelve months. A wide variety of placements can be found in the social, cultural, environmental and sports sector. Shorter placements of two weeks to two months are available to young people with fewer opportunities or special needs. Beyond benefiting the local communities, by participating in EVS, young volunteers can develop new skills and, therefore, improve their personal, educational and professional development.

# WORTH TO KNOW

## Capacity of generating new ideas



European School 2 – training course on project development, YouthNGOs and European Institutions 4-11th of January, taking place in beautiful Oviedo in Spain.

First day, all of us – 25 participants from different countries, feeling a bit insecure, not knowing each other before. In the beginning of the expectation round, we could see that we all came here for the same reason, apart of gaining knowledge we were looking for inspiration, motivation, new challenges. Each day of the training consisted of lectures, intensive workshops, fruitful discussions, group work and the opportunity to acquire knowledge about Cooperation with European Institutions, Youth Policies, Active Citizenship but at the same time to get know one another better. The program also included Conflict Management, Intercultural Learning, Soft Skills. Every single part demanded high-level of contribution from everyone. Everyday we became more comfortable expressing our thoughts and take a more active part in discussions. Moreover our trainers paid a lot of attention to Personal Development Plan, encouraging us to look deeper into ourselves, analyze our strengths and weaknesses and decide consciously how to develop ourselves and acquire new skills.

All the time impatiently we were waiting for the case work. What was crucial was that fact that topics were not chosen by the trainers, based on books or case studies, but were coming from us, our observations, identified problems, things that we want to change. Hilde, Timo, Verena, Arne, Miriam, Patrick and me. Different nationalities and life experiences, gathered in one room, brainstorming and analyzing needs, of society, of AEGEE, trying to come up with aims and objectives to discover what will make our project special, unique. None of us had ever imagined how hard it is to start the project from the scratch, with nothing to base on, to generate new ideas and come up with a common, shared vision. After two days of brainstorming, we presented in front of other participants, which was the great opportunity to get feedback, listen to the objective comments of our friends, people willing to help, capable to see our project from „outside“.

One of the most important factors, our trainers. Experienced people around us, available almost 24 hours per day, not only giving advice, proposing solutions or facilitating our discussions. People capable to share their idealism, their activism with us. After listening to them none of us could stay passive. The projects they made, all the obstacles they had overcome, the courage to take initiative and to make change. Thanks to them we have got what we were looking for – INSPIRATION.

What happened after European School 2? During case work we were supposed to prepare projects which could be implemented in AEGEE, but none forced us to do so, but we've done it. Two months of working via internet, mailing list, MSN meetings, doing researches, even though we are not English native speakers, we couldn't see each others faces, we were still able to discuss, generate new ideas and find solutions.

Finally, we met in Utrecht. Observing us developing the project, you could have got impression that we are completely different people. We used to be just group of AEGEE members with some unclear, slightly similar ideas. We have become a team. A group of friends, with a common goal, a common vision, already decided to dedicate 2 years of our lives to this project.

YOUrope needs YOU project dedicated to empower High School students. The chance to be active citizens, to gain satisfaction after projects well-done, beauty of being a volunteer and contribute to the society – we all have experienced it. Now we want to share it with High School students, by means of interactive workshops. We want to increase their knowledge about Europe, European values, European matters, then motivate them to take action to do something for their schools, their societies and keep them informed about all possibilities which Europe can offer them.

Delft – European Boards Meeting, 200 participants. We had the opportunity to present our project during one of the workshops. It was an amazing feeling to discover that we are not alone, that there are other people seeing the same problems, willing to make change and who are able to devote their time to help and support us.

We have become empowered during European School 2. Now we want to share our idealism, inspiration with the others. Moreover, our trainers showed us how by means of non-formal education we can develop ourselves, our ideas and create the project of which we would never have thought before. It is the reason why our whole project is based on non-formal education. We wish High School students to become as empowered and as confident in their abilities as we are.

We called ourselves Dream Team , a team which has a common

dream, but at the same time people who are able to dedicate themselves to make their dreams come true.



*Agnieszka Strycharz – volunteer, in the past Scout Organisation in Gliwice, currently Sup de Coeur in Montpellier. In AEGEE since 2005, exchanges coordinator, former Secretary, currently member of Advisory Board of AEGEE-Krakow and manager of YOUrope needs YOU*



SALTO-YOUTH.net is a network of 8 Resource Centers working on European priority areas within the youth field. It provides youth work and training resources and organizes training and contact-making activities to support organizations and National Agencies within the frame of the European Commission's and beyond. SALTO-YOUTH's history started in 2000 and is part of the European Commission's Training Strategy within the YOUTH program and works in synergy and complementarity with other partners in the field. Form more information about the SALTO-youth centers, its calendar of events and the database of trainers check its website [www.salto-youth.net](http://www.salto-youth.net)

# WORTH TO KNOW

# 3 CHAPTER

INFLUENCING THE SOCIETY





Non formal Education empowers young people to develop their values, to define their role in the society, to become active... In this chapter we want to point out the positive changes in the society that Non Formal Education is bringing. Young people active in their community explain how their participation in a NFE activity influenced themselves and their work.

# The power of change



“Be the change you want to see in the world” is the famous message of Mahatma Gandhi. Looking around us it is not hard to notice pictures that we do not like, see injustice, wish some things were different about the society we live in. Gandhi tells us to go beyond only dreaming about a better world, to take actions to make dreams come true! Of course trying to bring any social change is a huge challenge, especially if you are a young person. It seems you have too little power, too little influence on the reality. But if one starts with an initiative, there is a slight chance that more will follow. Non formal education offers a way to turn this slight chance into certainty.

Non formal education makes it possible for young people to take initiative and involve others in making small steps towards a better world. It is based on values and ideals, which should be at the core of any change for better. It deals with personal, voluntary involvement, and so the people are driven by their motivation and beliefs - they are committed. With such a mixture anything might be possible!

What makes the role of non formal education even stronger is the support given to it by different institutions with social missions. Having policies, programmes and funds based on (the use of) non formal education, these organization recognize it as a relevant and important factor in bringing a social change. They believe it works.

Why should bureaucrats from international organizations or youth activists involved at the grass root level trust that non formal education is a good way to combat the problems of today’s societies? Maybe because it approaches people differently, gets deeper inside them, because it gives hope for success in situations where other methods fail.

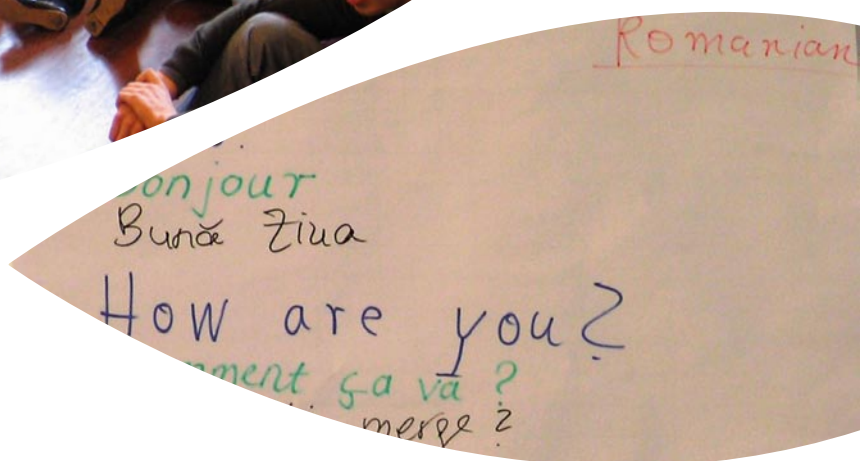
On the personal level, the uniqueness of the non formal approach comes from the fact that it touches upon emotions and attitudes, where formal education does not usually reach. It is complementary to school and higher education – develops different competences. The learning process of non formal education goes to a deeper level of personality. This is where a youth leader needs to get in order to develop understanding for social problems and capacity to deal with them.

Secondly, non formal approach is essential to carry through any change that has to do with peoples’ behaviors and their interactions. Especially when it is about the most important values, like freedom, human rights, democracy, peace, respect, diversity or gender equality. There are still too many examples of these values being ignored, threatened and violated, thus resulting in serious problems in the society. It is difficult to simply solve such issues, they are too deep, too sensitive and too complicated. Where politicians fail to find solutions, where formal approach gives poor results, there non formal education can be applied. In non formal setting a group is a basic unit, and so it shows that we are not on our own, that we depend on others as other people depend on us. This way of thinking helps to create the feeling of ownership and responsibility for the environment and people around.

Certainly there are methods and tools, other than education, which also help to deal with problems in the society. However the above mentioned specificities of non formal approach make it particularly suitable to address them. There are several fields where non formal methods have been proved to bring results and have been successfully applied, both by youth organizations and big institutions: social inclusion, conflict resolution, capacity building, active citizenship, sustainable development.

## Social inclusion

In Europe we tend to praise our cultural diversity and appreciate individualism. However even in countries seen as tolerant it is still a serious problem for some groups to feel and act as a rightful part of the society they live in, not mentioning even places where tolerance is not that popular. The exclusion is mostly the case of minorities - ethnic, religious, sexual or other; as well as people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, e.g. from poor families or with disabilities. The process of integration into the society faces hard obstacles from both sides: the excluded ones and those excluding them. The majority of groups need to become empathic and open minded to see that differences do not need be to divided. As for those in minority it is important to gain self confidence and take initiative to interact with society. More inclusive regulations, laws and stricter punishments for not respecting them can be part of the solution, but will not work alone.



Eventually it is all about attitudes of both sides and neither of them can be simply told to behave differently and be expected to do so. This can be achieved though by non formal education programmes designed to reach both of the sides.

#### **Conflict resolution**

There are places where in the past there has been a war, an occupation, or there is an age-long disagreement about borderline or ownership of piece of land. People living there are divided into sides and usually feel anger or hatred towards the others. So much harm has been done in the past (sometimes recent or still is) that each side feels hurt and blames the other. Each is convinced that their version of the story is the true one. These kinds of conflict areas are like inflammable objects, there is always a threat of use of force on either of the sides, slightest provocation easily results in violence and victims. To build peace and understanding in such places seems impossible. When diplomats sent by an international community make attempts to establish a dialogue between conflicted sides they meet the top level politicians and leaders, but average people stay out of it, keeping their prejudices and antipathies. To bring a change in their attitude it is necessary to let them experience the "others" as individual, normal people, in neutral situations. Through non formal education programmes such interactions can be facilitated, laying a foundation for dialogue, which in long term should result in better understanding and finally even cooperation beyond the conflict.

#### **Capacity building**

It is not possible for governments and organizations to provide help for all those who need it. Even when they manage to offer some material assistance, it might occur that in fact it causes more harm than good. Cases of developing countries show that international aid can have a dependence effect. Same as with the social security, when people expect that others will improve their situation, they tend to become passive and helpless. More sustainable way to actually level up their living standards is to pass the ownership of the situation in their hands. This is based on an assumption that people themselves know better what their needs are. Through capacity building communities are learning to stand on their own feet. If people discover and develop their competencies – they build self confidence. When they work on something together and see that

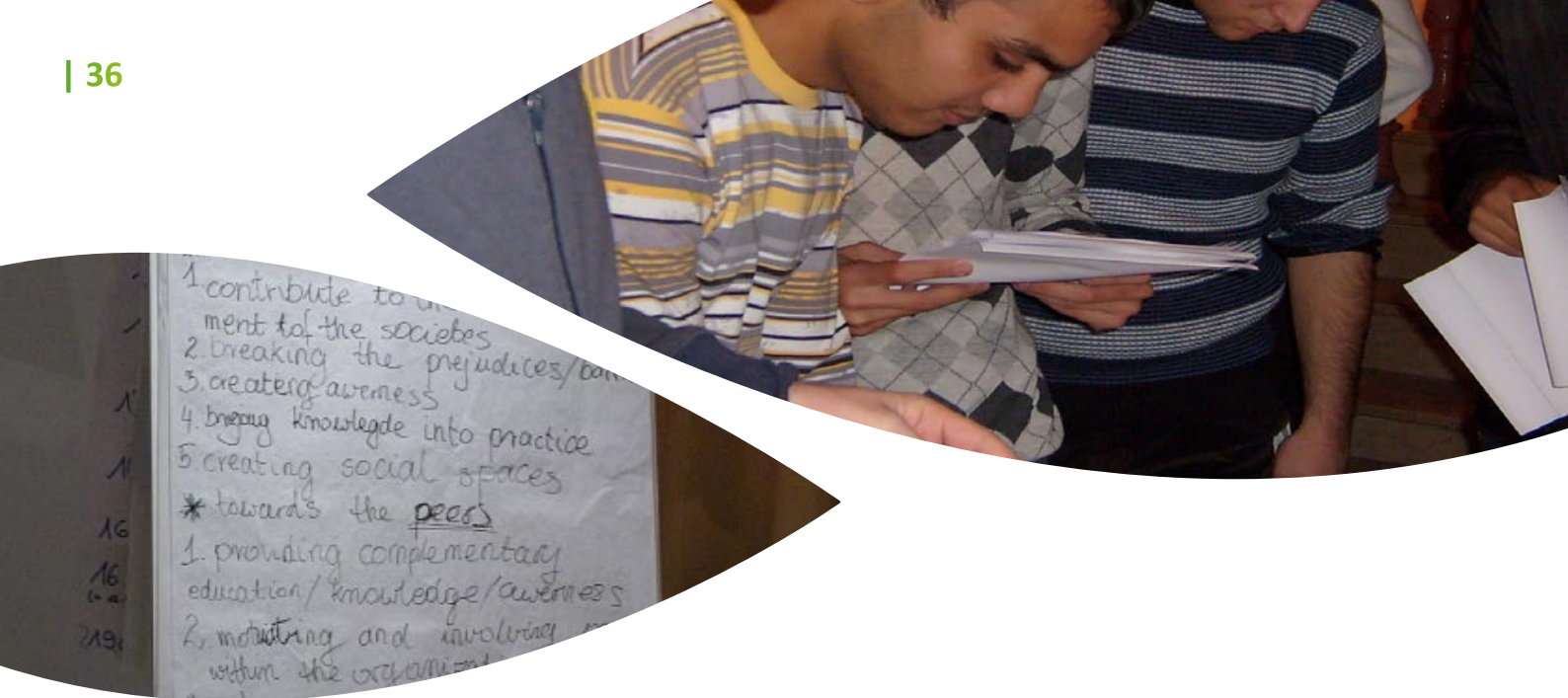
they are able to do it, it creates feeling of solidarity. Finally when people realize that they can decide about themselves and that if they do not take the lead, no one else will - the sense of responsibility and true ownership grows. This process of empowerment can be successfully initiated with methods of non formal education. Later it often leads to the establishment of non-governmental organizations run by community leaders, which is even greater a example of self-reliance and independence. In more developed societies it is usually the associations which need capacity building to be able to better fulfill their mission.

#### **Active citizenship**

In a democratic system every individual should be able to express their opinion. It is a right, but also a responsibility. In ideal situations citizens are involved in shaping the reality around them. However often people think they cannot have any impact anyway and they simply do not care. This hinders the development of civil society, and blocks any cooperation with political leaders, who in such case are allowed to decide just by themselves. Active civil society is essential for the success of any socio-political processes. Taking integration of Europeans as example: without participation of citizens, the mini-universe of Brussels is likely to stay a concept separated from real life, failing to address real needs of people. Citizens should be informed and involved, but they cannot be forced to do it. Non formal education encourages them to care and to make the most of existing possibilities to influence reality. It gives an idea of the potential and understanding of the role they have. Underneath all that it passes the values, and shows how to live them.

#### **Sustainable development**

While environment is a hot topic of the political discourse, for many organizations fighting for more sustainable living is a daily challenge. The message to save natural resources by using them more wisely and efficiently is not directed only to big corporations owing big factories. Dozens of millions of people leading everyday environment-not-friendly lifestyles are a huge problem. Bad habits like leaving the water on, lights left on, etc. are hardly influenced. To make people change their behavior to more sustainable, information campaigns are not enough - a deeper environmental education is necessary. Within non formal context it is possible to develop more conscious mindset and certain sensitivity to the nature.



The five above listed fields show that non formal education can have real impact on the society and support changes. These areas are actively explored by some international organizations, which realize their social missions also by use of non formal education. In the European context most relevant are the Council of Europe and the European Commission, globally it is mostly UNESCO.

The Council of Europe is known for its dedication to Human Rights Education (HRE) and great campaign for respect for diversity, social inclusion and participation "All Different All Equal". It has also developed a Pack with tools for Education for Democratic Citizenship. The European Commission supports and cooperates on many initiatives of CoE. Still its main non formal education programme, Youth in Action, puts emphasis on European citizenship, solidarity and involvement of young people in shaping future of European Union. The grant supports youth organizations' capacity building, fostering initiative and cooperation of youth from different EU and partner countries.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) takes a global perspective and thus is focused rather on problems of developing countries than Europe. It has facilitated the creation of the Education for All programme and continues to supervise its progress. One of EfA goals is about promoting learning and skills for young people and adults. It describes four pillars of life skills: learning to know, to be, to live together, and to do.

In developing countries of Africa or Asia non formal education traditionally has been mostly seen as a replacement for hardly accessible formal education and used for teaching basic literacy skills. However recently it is also being noticed that non formal approach does not only fill in the gap, but offers more possibilities to deal with challenges of democratization and community development, globalization or AIDS prevention. The Association for the Development of Education in Africa believes that only variety of non formal education programmes, grounded at grass-root level, can meet current learning needs of African societies.

Institutions and organizations might develop programmes and destine big parts of their budgets on these. But how do they really reach the society? Who is there to "be the change", to initiate it?

In-between normal people and high level offices there are the multipliers. These are usually youth leaders who have the potential to inspire and competences to spread the ideas, initiatives and information into the society. It's an investment – future multipliers first participate in training courses or long term programmes, in order to later use what they learned and act on others. This concept can be compared to circles on the water: they grow bigger and bigger, each next reaching further, but is all starts from one drop. Like such drops, multipliers go into the society and reach more and more people. Sometimes these people also become multipliers and the circles of social change go further and deeper.



*Asia Piskunowicz is definitely a Fan of education! In it's all three aspects: formal, non-formal and informal. She is a fifth year student at the Poznan University of Economics, specialising in economic journalism and public relations, passionate about her Master thesis.*

# From awareness to action



It was quite some years ago, when with the environmental team of my high school we went to the forest nearby and we played some strange games around the trees. All of us grew up in an unfriendly big city full of big houses, small houses, grey houses... cars, motorbikes, buses, trolleys and streets. Big streets, small streets, grey streets. As everyone could imagine, living in a city with such a variety of tints of grey, a day in the closest green forest was like a day in paradise. Being afraid to sit on the ground, to touch the dirt and face the different nits that were flying around us, we were asked to smell the nature, to draw our feelings, to discover the differences between the big and small leaves and touch as blindfolded the boles of the trees. The first negative reaction became curiosity and then fun. Although it was something quite new for almost all of us it seems we liked it a lot and we decided to start a project called "Discovering the paths of our mountain" in which we had the chance to experience more activities like that one. The whole year, during the weekends we had several meetings with the team taking part in environmental education activities on the mountain or at school and through our group work we prepared a small publication and a nice exhibition at the end of the year.

After the success of our project, we decided to continue with the environmental team and we did two more projects on air pollution and viable cities. Checking the fumes of different cars in the avenue close to our school, learning how to plant trees, making photos of our sky in different hours of the day were some of the activities we liked most. The one event was coming after the other, always in our free time with the support of the trainers of the Centre of Environmental Education of our region and our teachers. Time passed and the summer I finished school I felt so sad that I had to leave the environmental team so I searched a lot and I found out that I could still do things through voluntary work in an organization. After all, coming so close to the nature, getting to know more and more its problems we started feeling part of it, we cared about the consequences, we had a need of fresh air and green.

Soon I discovered WWF-Greece which integrated me in the organization warmly. In the beginning I was helping with different ways but soon after some transfer of knowledge I was able to do my own environmental education activity in a primary school. It was so exciting to see all these children playing, learning, being sometimes

even more critical than their parents towards the environmental problems of our world. My motivation was quite big so I tried to see how I could combine my theatre studies with environmental education fact that motivated me to attend seminars on the topic and soon I was able to use theatre improvisation and theatre games in our programs. On the other hand, WWF-Greece is an organization with a lot of experience in environmental education that offers different services to schools and organizes several events for children and young people giving us the chance to start initiatives and implement all our ideas. Within the 4 years I was active in the organization we visited a big amount of schools not only in Athens but in small islands and villages as well where the tourism and the lack of knowledge affect a lot the landscape. Through activities based on experiential learning, interactive exercises, simulation games, outdoor activities, debates and more we tried to prepare the future generation for a more responsible attitude towards the environment. And the feeling was always the same: "yes, we do change something... Children and young people are the future... As I was when I attended a similar activity few years ago"

Sometimes I am wondering how I would be if I hadn't participated in that activity in the forest...If I hadn't smelled the nature and heard the sound of the earth. Would I have at least a bit the sense of responsibility as a consumer, a citizen, as a human being? Listening something from a boring and didactic speech of a teacher wouldn't have the same influence on me like the activities that brought me closer to the environment and made me discover the problems and the consequences of our actions in the environment. My favorite saying in Non Formal Education is:

I hear –I remember  
I see-I understand  
I do- I learn  
and after all these years I am sure it works...



*Maria Nomikou has been active member of AEGEE and volunteer of WWF-Greece. She has worked as Youth and Education Coordinator in Fair Trade Hellas and she is currently member of the pool of trainers of the European Youth Forum.*

# A fair eye on global education



In the wake of the sixties, we saw the contestation of the status quo, both in trade as in education. Alongside non-formal, informal education, Educación Popular and others, Global Education emerged as a new approach. In this context, the Global Education and Youth Seminar (GEY) in Molina, tried to explore and provide some answers to define this emerging paradigm. We then tried to apply the results within a Fair Trade context.

The GEY explored different approaches, definitions, etc. which basically have similar approaches, concerns and use similar methods etc. Promoting our actions through the slogan “Global Education will change it’s stake-holders, and it’s stake-holders will change Global Education” gave us the impression that Global Education should have a dynamic definition, if one was really needed. So, we established that Global Education was a learning methodology on a set of issues characterized as “global”. Next, Global Education was seen as an emancipatory process of change for all the parties involved (stake-holders). The understanding of this concept became a sort of education about the world and its issues (globalization etc.), as well as a holistic approach to education, which should involve different actors but in the same time be accessible to everybody. This less rigid definition created an opportunity to make continuous efforts to review this definition critically through everyone’s participation, especially of the least empowered in the learning-process.

Around the same time as the period of the GEY-seminar, a group of volunteers from a Belgian Fair Trade Organization, decided to organize such an event for youth involved in the Fair Trade. The “EYE on Fair Trade”<sup>1</sup> was born. The common understanding developed in the GEY-seminar provided an opportunity to release its full potential and to go beyond the rather dull form of the classical seminar.

The Fair Trade idea is a relatively young concept within the tradition of development planning. It seeks to empower disadvantaged producer-groups by offering trade deals based on a better price, long term contracts and pre-financing alongside the more classical approach of technical assistance. By advocating a more just trading system and raising awareness, the Fair Trade movement wants to offer a real alternative for poor people.

Both the economic aspect of giving the producer a more equal position in the supply-chain as well as the awareness-raising part are at the heart of Fair Trade and our seminar. As there is a tendency to organize things mostly grass-root and action oriented, we created a more balanced relationship between producers and consumers (both in the North and South as well as other places). The Fair Trade movement offers thus an interesting platform to start with Education for Sustainable Development and Global Education, in all the true senses of the word “global”.

Revolutionary phrases like “critical dialogue” and “liberative co-operation”, as described by Paolo Freire, are no longer dreams but opportunities to be grasped. Nevertheless, there are some northern biases still to be tackled in both the education and awareness raising activities of the northern partners. The partners in the South get involved too little in the northern general decision making structures and the design of the education activities in particular. Furthermore, the grass-roots tradition is not necessarily a virtue as big corporations like Nestle move into the Fair Trade market and provide very little education activity. These weaknesses show there still is enough room for improvement, and both the critical perspective of Mr. Freire and the concept of Global Education challenge us to tackle some of them.

On a practical level, one of the main aims of the seminar was to add a participatory dimension that would go beyond tokenism. Although we started with the relatively classical form of a seminar, the paradigm of Global Education proved a powerful tool in creating added education value, especially from a participation point of view. The preparation team proposed a draft programme offering a balanced mix of external experts, peer-learning sessions, brainstorming sessions, learning games and reflection moments. This draft program was then discussed during a weekend with representatives of all the delegations. After the weekend, the program was dramatically modified, and the definition and preparation of different parts of the seminar were distributed over the different delegation groups.

We wanted to continue at this pace, to make the seminar entirely participant - driven. The delegations from different countries were given some time to reflect in their groups on the programme of the day. On the one hand, it gave an opportunity to make small evaluations which enabled the steering committee (in which every delegation was represented) to act decisively in order to enact on demanded adjustments. On the other hand, the delegation meetings were a platform where the participants could reflect how to fully maximise the lessons learnt during the seminar in their own work. We have the impression that this participation structure created a real ownership-feeling for the participants and enabled all of us to really take something with us when returning home.

The Global Education Paradigm provided to be a welcome “shot of oxygen”, in order to make the classical concept of a seminar

more dynamic. Whereas Global Education has an aura of political and ethical idealism, it is also source for pragmatic ‘real-politiker’ implementation in classic learning environments. This case would suggest further study and experimentation with Global Education to improve other learning systems.



*Ben Vanpeperstraete has graduated from the faculty of Sociology and Anthropology of the Université Libre de Bruxelles. He has a master in Sociology and in General Economy and he is active in the organization Oxfam as board member of Oxfam Wereldwinkels vzw.*



The North-South Centre of Council of Europe enhance and sustain strategies and capacity-building for global education, targeting institutions and practitioners in the field of global education in the formal and non-formal sector. One of its global education practices is the organization of the Global Education Week which since 1998 encourages pupils and teachers as well as youth groups to explore educational activities for global citizenship. For more information about the global education week in your country check the website of the North-South Centre of Council of Europe [www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre)

# WORTH TO KNOW

# Learning the thirst of learning



It is more than two years ago that I took a plane to Sweden, arrived in a small deserted place at the outskirts of Gothenburg to spend a training with a group of people who I did not know beforehand.

Ten days later I had to say one of the hardest goodbyes in my life. Because during the time spent in the Swedish countryside, I had undergone amazing changes with this group of people. It was the time to say goodbye to people who had grown with you, who helped you to better understand yourself as a person and as a trainer. People, whose words still cling to my ears when looking back.

From 14 until 23 April 2006 I participated in the course “Training for Starting Trainers”, organised by “WithVision” and the European Youth Parliament of Sweden. The training aimed at creating an opportunity for self-growth, learning and exchange regarding knowledge, skills and attitudes for non-formal education activities for 25 experienced youth workers. The course furthermore strived to provide participants with training skills to competently and confidently plan, run and evaluate a training course within the context of intercultural youth work.

Today, I work as volunteer trainer and project manager of youth projects within AEGEE. As board member of AEGEE’s Human Resources Working Group I work on developing concepts and implementing international training courses.

In everything I do as trainer, I always look back at the Training for Trainers and what I learned from it. Its learning experiences still serve me as a roadmap of where to go. In many ways these ten days prepared me for my further activism as volunteer in my community:

Through the course of the training and its effects, I became aware of myself as a person much more than I ever was before, got to know about my weaknesses and started seeing and appreciating my strengths. This self-awareness is one of the basis I need today in my work as volunteer trainer and without whom I am sure I would feel lost.

In Sweden, I became conscious of how important it is to understand how differently people see the world and reality. The co-op-

eration during the training with fellow participants was marked by true dialogue and not only talking, but really seeking to understand one another. Through that, I realised how beautiful it is to be able to truly appreciate others and to be truly appreciated in return by them, to turn our differences into strengths and to see this diversity we all bring along as a positive approach to learning.

Learning to learn and that learning never stops is another essential point that I value from the training. It is the most fundamental basis for my work as a trainer, to know that there is always more to see, more to experience, more to learn and that the road of learning never ends.

Trying to put it in a nutshell, the training was a source of inspiration, motivation, creativity and learning, stimulating a belief in change and that each and everyone of us can contribute actively in shaping the community around us.

Until today, the training remains a solid basis of reference to me for future trainings, it serves as ground on what to base other trainings on and equipped me with the competences to work as trainer in youth work today.

I left Sweden with an urge for reflection about my life and the world we live in; my family and friends, the community around me. I was not sure where to go, but I had been given the precious gift of knowing myself better, starting to become conscious of the wishes and dreams existing deep down inside me.

Trying to grasp all impressions and experiences from the training seems impossible now ... It is amazing for me to see how much I still benefit and learn from my participation in this training ... Let me leave a final word for all those making this training become what it was: Thanks for being an inspiration in Sweden!



*Julia Hoffmann is Board Member of the Academy, AEGEE’s Human Resources Working Group. She has been involved in youth work for four years. Julia is active in several international training courses and projects in European youth work.*



## Spreading activism at universities



Students are a privileged group - they get diplomas, which are seen as guarantee of success in life. They are an 'elite', compared to social groups like minorities, poor children or homeless people. On the other hand educated young people are the future of the society. The knowledge and skills they gain should be used not only to achieve good social status, but also for the benefit of others. This youth, living rather smooth life, needs to develop a sense of responsibility for the world around them and sensitivity for its problems. Non-formal education gives students the opportunity to experience and learn to respect others, show initiative, understand and value differences between people. Students need non-formal education – next to formal one - to get a deeper notion of their role in the society and to activate their potential for its benefit.

Developing proactive attitude of students is also in the best interest of higher education institutions. Education systems cannot progress and respond to the changing needs, if students - one of the sides concerned, are not being properly involved and are not expressing these needs. To activate them bottom-up initiatives should be fostered. This goes best through peer contacts, since friends have big influence on young people. Non-formal education, linked with the peer approach, builds up students' capacity and makes them stronger and more pro-active.

Where does non-formal education reveal the potential lying within the student community? It happens in student associations, at training courses or international events.

One of the fields where non-formal methods make a big difference are the students exchanges, programmes with higher goals of international cooperation and cultural understanding. This kind of experience – long stay in another culture, with another language, lifestyle, often different academic system and content – is a unique opportunity which students should use, but also an intense trial. Two main challenges are coming alongside. Firstly students are not always eager to go abroad, being biased or discouraged by various mental barriers. Secondly, those grabbing the chance are not prepared enough to accommodate the new situation and benefit from it. Next to the knowledge about the place or language skills, a necessary element of successful exchanges is the student's open mindset. Dealing with stereotypes, cultural shock or integration

problems, drawing conclusions and learning from living in another environment needs to be facilitated. Otherwise it can turn into a shallow or negative memory.

The example of the Mobility Training Course held by AEGEE shows how non-formal approach can help students to make the best use of the exchanges. Its purpose was to increase the quality and efficiency of the work of young people, involved within their universities international offices. For one week an international group of participants has been learning through non-formal methods how to spread 'international attitude'. They got into the understanding of cultural adaptation and learning cycles, in order to be able to better meet the needs of the incoming and outgoing students back home. The more preparatory workshops and sessions the MTS participants will organise at their universities after the training course, the more students will get a chance for a better learning experience during their stay abroad and the more prejudices and borders will be broken in their adult life.

Representation of students' interests is another example of their participation. Even if there are structures for students to voice their concerns at the faculty, university or higher levels, it is hard to make it a democratic process. Regular students often aren't consulted or aware of what is being said in their name. To guarantee that the voice of a wider community is being expressed, students need to be encouraged to speak up. Non-formal education activities are bringing visible results in raising participation at universities. An example of such an initiative is the Education Action Week (EAW) organised within the frame of the Education Unlimited project of AEGEE. Local students groups at various European universities have been encouraged to organise activities to show interest in their education systems. Firstly, by the means of non formal education the students-initiators of these events have been prepared to lead them and involve local student communities. These leaders participated in training courses and workshops, during which they have been running simulations of activities or learning to use promotion tools, to raise interest in the topic among young people.

They were learning from each other – exchanging information on students' participation at different European universities and sharing best practices. As an outcome different events have been organised during the Education Action Week in autumn 2007: meetings, fairs and workshops. In all EAW cities students have expressed wishes and opinions, directly or indirectly to their deans, professors and colleagues-students. They took initiative and tried to be a part of the solution to existing problems. It definitely didn't put an end to all problematic issues, but it showed that the responsibility for improvements at higher education institutions is on both sides – the authorities as well as the students. It also showed that the bottom-up initiatives can work, if supported enough with preparations and encouragement. This support came with the non-formal education of the EAW initiators.

Not to use the potential hidden in students' community for the benefit of the society is a great waste. In order to wake it up and extract it, participatory, learner-centred and values-based methods are necessary. And these methods are provided by non-formal education. To get involved in non-formal education activities students need the support of their universities - to make it possible they need to invest (necessary) time on it. They also need encouragement, which comes with general recognition of non-formal education. More and more young people should get a chance to combine formal and non-formal education, because the benefit will be much broader than individual. When young, educated people become also active and responsible citizens, the future is more likely to welcome good leaders..

ASIA PISKUNOWICZ



The new Life Long Learning Programme (LLP) (2007-2013) supports learning opportunities from childhood to old age in every single life situation. Among others, it includes 4 different programmes which give the chance to children, young people and adults and to further develop themselves through non formal education and informal learning. \*Comenius: Different actions in Schools  
 \*Erasmus: Exchanges of students in higher education and cooperation between universities  
 \* Leonardo da Vinci: Vocational education and training \*Grundtvig: Adult Education.  
 The programme is funded by the European Commission and you can find more information in [www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/](http://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/)

# WORTH TO KNOW

## Acting locally, influencing globally...

One day, I was attending with my classmates an environmental laboratory session held by educators of the non governmental organisation, Legambiente, and a new horizon opened in my life. I was just fifteen years old. I was good enough as a student within the formal education system, but non formal education started giving me new motives and interests.

Since then, I have never stopped looking for leaning opportunities in the field of non formal learning, through learning by doing and learning by experiencing. Day by day, I became richer and prouder to be an active citizen as a result of my participation in several Civil Society's initiatives. At that time, I didn't know anything about the opportunity of the European Voluntary Service (EVS) project. Now, I am able to see the EVS project as a milestone in my life. So, somehow I can consider my life as divided in the ante EVS and the post EVS period.

Ante EVS period: I was looking for every kind of opportunity which would allow me to taste a world under construction. I attended seminars, participated in voluntary actions, supported civic campaigns, and joined political youth movement pilot projects in the frame of the Youth for Europe programme. In August 1997, a sort of enlightenment came in Coniston where I attended the international youth meeting Biodiversity: Nature and Culture. I just realised that this was what I wanted to do. And then, my EVS in Greece came to my life and along with that the big challenge to explain to the people around me in Potenza, my home town in Italy, what EVS was about and why I wanted to do it. In 1998, the EVS was still a pilot project and I was lucky to be hosted in Athens by the Hellenic Children's Museum, a dynamic, creative and progressive environment where non formal education is not just a methodological tool but its core philosophy and ideology. So, in this interactive learning environment, I acquired knowledge embedded through the experiential learning process; I became an active listener and able to understand the different needs of different people.

Post EVS period: the research and the investment of personal time in the non formal education was finally done less randomly. I got the chance to join several seminars for youth workers and particularly the unforgettable 'Training for Trainers' in Strasburg, organised by the Alliance of European Voluntary Organisations and the

Council of Europe. At the end, I felt mature enough to make a brave decision for my professional and personal life: to use my NFL experience and background in order both to pursue a professional career and exercise my active citizenship.

And the dream came true! I got a job as Volunteers and International Programme Coordinator in Elix- Conservation Volunteers Greece, the main activity of which is the organisation of international voluntary work-camps and its wider aim the activation of active citizenship through participation in short and medium term international voluntary educational, environmental and cultural activities. While working there, the alarm clock for the Future Capital rang just before the deadline for the application. Thanks to that, the support of a small group of dedicated volunteers and my strong belief that the fair-trade movement should be introduced in Greece, we founded Fair Trade Hellas, an NGO aiming at the promotion of fair trade in Greece. After two years of hard work, with lots of ups and downs, we finally managed to open the first fair-trade non profit shops in Athens and Thessaloniki. In less than three years, the organisation has become widely known in Greece and has been highly respected by the civil society, the public and the media. One of its key activities is the promotion of non formal learning through participation in European and international educational and voluntary programmes.

From my personal point of view, being today the Director of the NGO 'Elix – Conservation Volunteers Greece', the organisation for which I have been working for six years, as well as keeping the role of the Chair of Fair Trade Hellas, the organisation which I initiated some years ago, I feel that I have fulfilled the dreams which were created by and through my non formal educational experiences.

For me, non formal learning is knowledge, imagination, creativity, professionalism, faces, friends, feelings, future, life itself!



*Marina Sarli is an Italian young activist who did her European Voluntary Service in Greece and since then she felt in love with the country. She is the founder and the president of the organization Fair Trade Hellas, the first fair trade organization in Greece.*

# 4 CHAPTER

STEPS TO RECOGNITION

On one hand Non Formal Education plays an important role on the personal development of young people. On the other hand, the diplomas and certificates of formal education don't give the full picture of someone's real competences. For this reason, different organizations, platforms of organizations and European institutions develop different tools that will support the recognition and the visibility of the skills and competences acquired through Non Formal Education.



# European portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers



The European portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers is an initiative of the Council of Europe. It has been developed as a concrete illustration of the commitment of the governments of the member states of this Organisation to promote the recognition of non-formal learning of young people, and of competences acquired in this framework through the practice of youth work.

The portfolio has been designed from the experience and practice of the Council of Europe in the youth field since the early seventies, and particularly in the area of youth leader and youth worker training. During more than 30 years, the Council of Europe youth sector has developed a wide range of training courses for youth leaders, multipliers, young democratic leaders involved in different areas of public life, young researchers, and civil servants from across Europe. These courses cover a large range of subjects, including organising international activities, working in international youth structures, international youth co-operation, human rights education, conflict management, youth participation, citizenship and many other topics. In this context, the Council of Europe has also developed numerous innovative educational and training tools and research work, for example on young people, non-formal learning, youth work and associative life, and has elaborated criteria and quality standards for youth work and youth policy.

This sum of experience and practice has inspired the concept and methodology of the present portfolio, which will hopefully help youth leaders and youth workers across Europe to identify, assess and describe their profile of competences and situate it in relation to the common reference standards of the Council of Europe. In this context, the aims of the portfolio are:

- to identify, assess and record competences acquired through the practice of youth work
- to describe competences to others, and
- to set one's own learning and development goals.

The portfolio is based on the identification of a list of key functions and competences of youth leaders and youth workers. These key functions and competences have been developed with a view to covering any youth work situation.

The Council of Europe and all its partners (governmental and non governmental) consider this portfolio as a useful tool in different respects:

\* the portfolio is the first real attempt to develop a European reference framework for defining the key functions and competences of youth leaders and youth workers, based on quality standards that can be widely acknowledged. In that sense, the portfolio is likely to effectively contribute to support the quality of youth work and therefore its further recognition, in particular in countries where, for various reasons, the value of youth work still needs to be recognised.

\* the portfolio reflects a certain vision of youth work based on the fundamental values of the Council of Europe such as human rights, democracy, tolerance, etc. In that sense, it contributes to support the commitment of youth leaders/workers and their organisations/structures to the objectives of the Council of Europe.

\* Youth work in all its different forms is probably the most appropriate place for developing non-formal education and represents a very powerful instrument in this respect. Nowadays, the important role of non-formal education within the overall (lifelong) learning environment is increasingly acknowledged, although the recognition of the knowledge and competences acquired in non formal education still needs to be accepted and promoted. The portfolio may contribute to this debate, as it provides notably an example of method to assess competences acquired in non formal education.

Our next steps will be to further work on the dissemination and promotion of the portfolio (creating a web page). Furthermore, an ad hoc group of experts will examine concrete ways to better support the recognition of youth work, including by developing materials and tools. Our ambition is also to seek ways to reach a common acknowledgement and support from the Council of Europe member states, of the value and relevance of the portfolio, as did the European Council of the EU in a Resolution concerning non formal learning, in which they refer to our portfolio as a good example of instrument.

# YOUTHPASS-EUROPASS



Based on a 2006 Council Resolution the Commission together with the Member States, youth organisations and other stakeholders is preparing a way to recognise skills and competences acquired by young people through non-formal and informal learning and to make them visible in Europass.

## EUROPASS

To establish a system to improve visibility and transfer of learning outcomes in the youth field a close look at instruments that already exist at different levels was required. Such an instrument is the Europass. Europass aims at improved transparency of qualifications in order to facilitate mobility throughout Europe for lifelong learning and employment. It includes 5 instruments: a Curriculum Vitae (CV), a Diploma Supplement for Higher Education, a Certificate Supplement for vocational education and training, a Language Passport and a Mobility tool. After the recent first evaluation of Europass it can be considered to further develop the Europass portfolio by adding new elements or by modifying the existing documents with a view to improve their non-formal learning dimension. For instance, existing Europass elements such as the Europass CV could be adjusted to better deal with outcomes of non-formal learning activities of young people. Particularly its personal skills section is very helpful for young or inexperienced people as it provides them with the opportunity to indicate competences they may have acquired through youth activities. This section is most likely to be further developed.

Through such developments, non-formal learning outcomes of young people would not be recognised in any formal way, but they would become clearer and more visible. This will enhance the chance that these outcomes are adequately appreciated by employers or authorities and thus improve the perspective of individual young people to be better integrated in education, training and employment. In order to address outcomes from non-formal and informal learning that are not easily or not sufficiently described in other documents, the development of a new Europass self-assessment element could also be considered. Its aim would be to make individual non-formal and informal learning outcomes visible and make it easier for third persons – particularly in another country – to understand what these learning outcomes mean in terms of knowledge and competences acquired by its holder.

In terms of coherence at national and European level it is rather important that developments in the youth field are linked to the existing framework of Education and Training, in particular to the European Qualifications Framework which puts a particular focus on learning outcomes. The Key Competences for life long learning are another core element for better recognition of learning outcomes. The European Parliament and the Council adopted a recommendation which sets out 8 key competences: Communication in the mother tongue; Communication in foreign languages; Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; Digital competence; Learning to learn; Social and civic competences; Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and Cultural awareness and expression. The youth field contributes in many various ways to the acquisition of key competences. Youth exchanges foster the ability to communicate in the mother tongue as well as in a foreign language. Youth work in general contributes to the acquisition of other competences and therefore promotes an integrated lifelong learning approach.

## YOUTHPASS

Youthpass is the instrument for validation of non-formal learning experiences acquired by young people through participation in the Youth in Action programme, thus it provides a real added value for young people at the European level. It functions also as a bridge between the youth field and Education and Training because it already now makes full use of the Key Competences framework. The developments described above are important steps forward based on intense and comprehensive discussion and a close cooperation of the Member States, the Commission, the stakeholders in the education and youth field and young people themselves. This dialogue has to be continued in order to fully implement the instruments and to make sure they meet the needs of young people and the stakeholders in different sectors and at different levels.



*Manfred von Hebel; Educational Scientist; 2001 – 2005 Managing Director of the Association for Youth and Social Work, Germany; since 2005 national expert at the Youth Policy unit of the General Directorate for Education and Culture of the European Commission.*

# 4 CHAPTER

AEGEE AND NFE



AEGEE is one of the biggest consumers of non-formal education at all levels. Fresh members start experiencing already at local level so called LTCs - Local Training Courses. Members from newly established antennae (local branches) especially in remote regions have the opportunity to visit strong and old antennae for 20 days within the frames of Job Shadowing Visits, and acquire organizational management skills in non formal settings. At European Level European Schools and Training Courses with different thematic focus, give AEGEE members opportunity to acquire competencies in different fields also in non formal settings. But it is not all, non formal education is everywhere in AEGEE – workshops and training sessions during AGORA and European Boards meeting; both of them are the biggest statutory meetings in AEGEE, gathering between 300 and 800 young people from all over Europe.



# Learning to make your dreams come true



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. In-deed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

## IMAGINE ...

A European network of young volunteers, consisting of 15.000 members, spread across more than 40 different European nations, living in more than 240 university cities, studying a diversity of disciplines, investing their free time for volunteer work, staying active around three years in the organisation. All of them together are running one of the biggest voluntary student organisations in Europe, organising more than 300 events per year in the quest for bringing Europe closer together, against obstacles like prejudice and stereotypes, but building bridges across countries.

Our members are the ones turning all ideas into action, turning them into reality. They are AEGEE’s most precious resource - and one of the most difficult to handle.

## ROLE AND VISION OF AEGEE-ACADEMY

Sustaining AEGEE’s human resources and enabling its members to turn their ideas and wishes into reality has been the long-term vision of AEGEE-Academy since its foundation in 1999.

The main aim of Academy is to develop and strengthen the human resources of AEGEE and to stimulate the motivation of its members. It strives to combine the competences of AEGEE members with the potential AEGEE offers them towards the achievement of the organisations aims. The Academy supports the personal development of AEGEE members by providing a diversity of training courses and co-ordinating a mentorship system.

It maintains an overview of the personage and tasks in the organisation and empowers its members to find their place in the organisation.

## NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN ACADEMY

Learning ... but HOW? All of the Academy’s actions in its Human Resources work address learning of its members in order to achieve the aims of the organization. They address the attitudes, skills and knowledge of its members.

Academy’s training courses, the so-called “European Schools”, are all based on features of Non-Formal Education. By taking part in

our courses, AEGEE members are gaining those competences which enable them to turn their ideas into reality:

**Voluntary** – As their involvement in AEGEE, participation of our members in the training courses is done on voluntary basis.

**European** - All training courses assemble a group of participants and trainers from a diversity of backgrounds, cultures and nations. A truly European atmosphere with intercultural teamwork and understanding is created. Through this, thinking in intercultural dimensions is fostered, and values such as tolerance, respect for others and intercultural dialogue are actively exercised practiced.

**Participative** - European Schools are based on the participation and interaction of the young people attending the course. In the so called “case works”, simulation games which last several days, participants are working in small international teams, and work on organising a project, developing a PR strategy or designing a training. This way, they get the opportunity to actively practice their skills.

**Creative** – The methods used in the trainings offer a wide variety of exercises and adapt to a diversity of learning styles. Participants are encouraged to express their ideas and thoughts in creative ways.

**Learner-centred** – The curriculum is designed according to what participants need in their NGO work back home. It is characterised by its importance their work as volunteers and addresses their activism in their social communities.

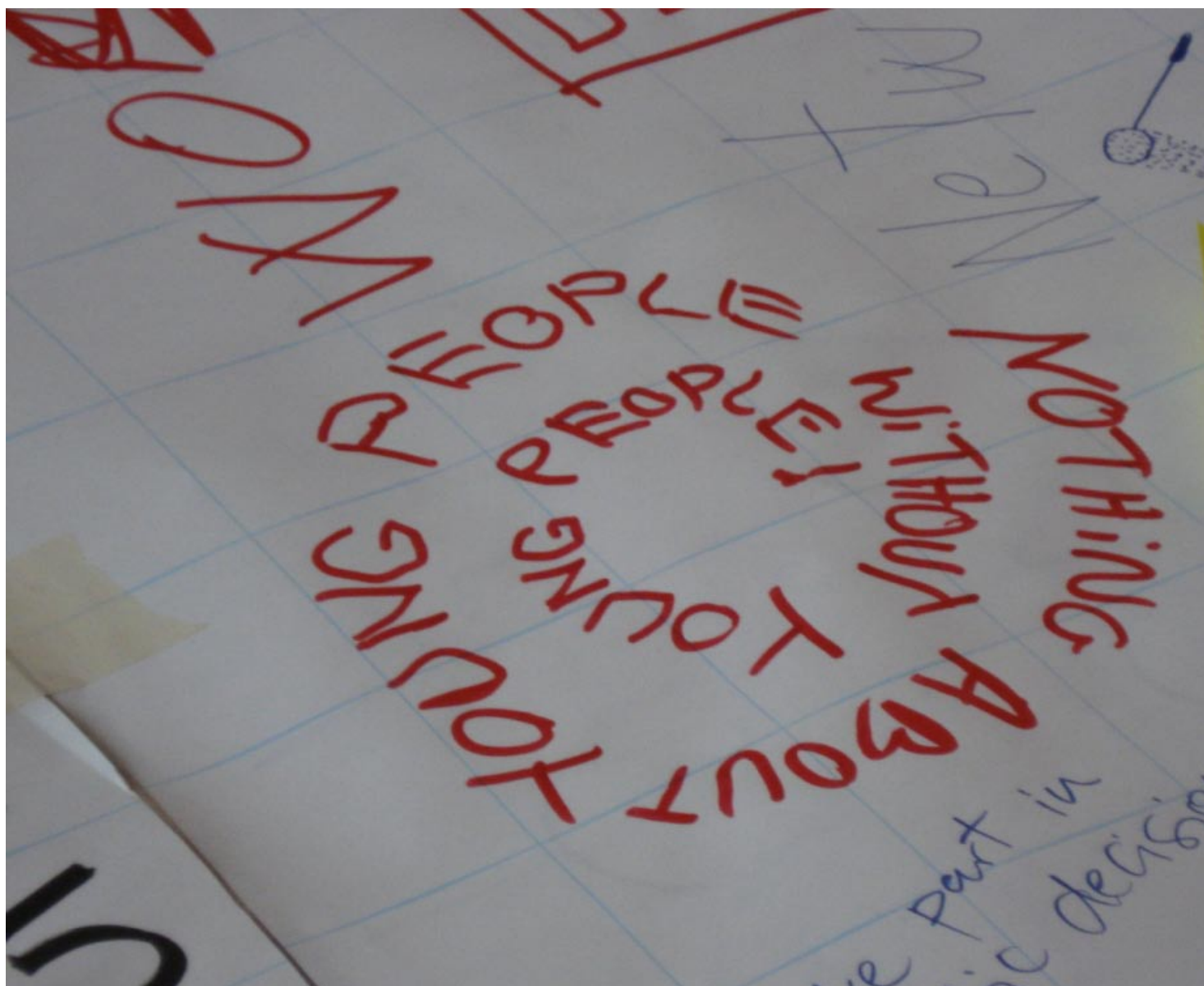
**Fun** – All trainings are combined with a lot of fun for the participants, the trainers and the organisers. Either intercultural evenings, street actions, theme dress parties or other things – an exciting social programme is always a guarantee for the success of our trainings.

All that equals ... EFFECTS!

Participants of European Schools are “infected” with a virus of motivation and enthusiasm for developing their involvement in social youth work! They are inspired by the truly European atmosphere achieved through a training. They find friends coming from all over Europe, friends they will stay in contact and work with in future, friends sharing their same dream for Europe, coming closer together. Through our trainings the AEGEE network is continuously being built on personal relationships between its members.



*Julia Hoffmann is Board Member of the Academy, AEGEE's Human Resources Working Group. She has been involved in AEGEE for four years: first in the work of her local in Mainz, later in the International Politics Working Group and the Caucasus Project.*



Youth in Action is the Programme the European Union has set up for young people. It aims to inspire a sense of active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union's future. It promotes mobility within and beyond the EU's borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourages the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background: Youth in Action is a Programme for all! Through its 5 actions it supports numerous youth activities which are based on non formal education and informal learning such as youth exchanges, trainings, seminars, European Voluntary Service, job shadowing visits etc. For more information visit the [www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth](http://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth)

# WORTH TO KNOW

# Learning politics? Experiencing politics!



As Mahatma Gandhi said, “You must be the change you want to see in the world!” What the International Politics Working Group (IPWG) can do is only to facilitate such a change. And in the past years, as well as certainly also in the future, non-formal education method often laid the basis for AEGEE projects in the field of politics.

## The AEGEE-International Politics Working Group

First of all, let's give an introduction to this Working Group of AEGEE. IPWG describes it-self as a group of members of AEGEE interested in international affairs, politics and diplomacy. The group is a network existing to facilitate the co-ordination of local efforts on the field of European and international politics throughout Europe. Therefore, this working group enables information exchange in order to create benefit for our members and to foster successful AEGEE activities. Providing and handing on all kinds of ideas, support, expertise, links, and relations will be the means to reach this goal.

## Non-Formal education and IPWG

In many aspects of IPWG courses conducted over the years, non-formal education tools were used. Be it a workshop a small workshop of two hours or a in-debt training on Conflict Management, the participants joined because they wanted to learn something, very often in a topic they do not have abroad knowledge or no practical experience. For non-formal education this is not needed, what counts is to develop certain competences. That's why the workshops and seminars of IPWG are always implemented in a non-formal way.

Given the various cultural backgrounds of trainers and participants at such events, non-formal learning contributes to sensitizing cultural differences, learning from each other and respecting other ways of working and acting.

## Example of Activities

### Conflict Management

Since December 2005, AEGEE-Europe and subsequently IPWG organized trainings on conflict handling and mediation. Also the third conflict handling training in 2008 is implemented with NFE-tools. Improvisation theatre as innovative method confronts conflicting characters. As spectators can join the play at any time, it encourages all the participants to take an active stand and participate actively. Being able to change the course of the play, the participants learn that they can actually take hold of their lives and get out of what, on the first view, seemed implacably oppressing situations. Furthermore, improvisation theatre enhances empathy and teaches the actors to deal with each other's feelings. Lateral Thinking consists of a series of techniques meant to bypass the common vertical thinking process and complementing it. It can serve as a tool in order to generate new solutions to solve conflicts.

### European Citizenship

In October 2007 IPWG started with a first training event on European Citizenship, followed by a training in Kosovo in February 2008. As the wordings “Active Citizenship” or “European Citizenship” are very vague and subject to discussion, the participants through simulations and role – play games could express “What is Europe for them” and go deep into the meaning of European Identity. Group face the differences and similarities in the cultural concepts toward that issue and learn them by experience. Instead of having formal lecture on minorities participants got the group assignment about situation of minorities and media and went to Mirtovica to have an insight into both parts of the city as well as meet young people and initiatives and local representation. This meeting gave them the unique possibility to learn about the topic in natural environment.

### Value of NFE tools compared to scientific learning

Many topics trained at the aforementioned events, also are taught at university courses. So the question that might arise is: What is the difference or added-value of joining a non-formal education event on such a subject? Well, it is quite simple -. Books are not important, it also is not important what a professor tells – what counts is simply and only what competences you develop. With the facilitation of experienced trainers, the learning possibilities can be at any time adapted to the needs of the participants and to

the group dynamics. To give a simple example – at the Diplomatic Seminar in Bucuresti (2003) the participants simulated a press conference – and as all noted afterwards it felt realistic, “journalists” attacked the “diplomats”, people felt offended or embarrassed. Only seldom a university lecture can provide such an experience. Linked with such a practice are the reflection of the feelings and the values connected to a certain situation.



*Agata Patecka is former President of AEGEE-Poznan currently the Board Member of the AEGEE - International Politics Working Group responsible for Human Resources, member of AEGEE-Academy.*



*Patrik Reuter is currently the Speaker of the AEGEE-International Politics Working Group, board member of AEGEE-Academy and was active in various projects of AEGEE, among them “EU&Europe – discover your neighbours” and “Tolerance Acceptance Peace”.*



Youth in Action is the Programme the European Union has set up for young people. It aims to inspire a sense of active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union's future. It promotes mobility within and beyond the EU's borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourages the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background: Youth in Action is a Programme for all! Through its 5 actions it supports numerous youth activities which are based on non formal education and informal learning such as youth exchanges, trainings, seminars, European Voluntary Service, job shadowing visits etc. For more information visit the [www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth](http://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth)

# WORTH TO KNOW

# TERMINOLOGY





## OBJECT OF RECOGNITION

**POTENTIAL** refers to all the cognitive, affective and practical capacities and achievements that a person could develop and that could be fostered by motivation and desire, by effort and application, by learning and life experience.

**CAPACITY** is similar to potential, but is typically used in a more specific way to refer to particular kinds of individual potential and also implies having some kind of related knowledge, skill or competence.

**ABILITY** refers to capacities that someone can already demonstrate that s/he possesses, such as having the ability to speak a certain language.

**CAPABILITY** refers to what someone can demonstrably or presumably do, and therefore it is similar to the terms skills and competence.

**KNOWLEDGE:** it is impossible to provide a satisfactory account of the conceptual background behind the term 'knowledge' in a few words. In the everyday world, the meaning of the term knowledge appears self-evident: it is what someone individually knows or the sum of what a given civilisation collectively knows. But what does it mean to know something? What is it that is known, how do we come to know it, why does it count as something worth knowing, and what do we do with it when we know it? In educational practice knowledge is what there is to learn, but it is not necessarily useful and worthwhile of its own accord. It has to be joined up with skills and competences (to become useful) on the one hand – and no less importantly, with principles and values (to become worthwhile) on the other hand.

**SKILL** means having the knowledge and experience needed to perform a specific task or job – someone who has learned what to do (possesses the knowledge) and how to do it (can transfer the knowledge into real practice), which also means that someone else can observe the skill in action.

**COMPETENCE** is often used interchangeably with the term skill, but they do not really mean the same thing. Competence means the ability to apply knowledge, know-how and skills in a stable/recurring or changing situation. Two elements are crucial: applying what one knows and can do to a specific task or problem, and being able to transfer this ability between different situations.

## FORMS AND PROCEDURES

**DOCUMENTATION** refers to a (virtual or real) paper or visual record. Documents stand for evidence, either because of the information they actually contain (for example, the love letter), or because the content bears recognised witness to the truth and accuracy of what it claims (for example, the university degree certificate).

**COMPARISON** means to set one thing next to another (or several other things) in order to be able to see and perhaps measure the similarities and differences between them. Comparison only makes sense if the items to be compared either can be held to belong to the same category of phenomena or can all be set in relation to a

quality external to themselves.

**EVALUATION:** in English, evaluation only means to make a reasoned judgement about or to give a plausible account of something. It does not imply any specific purpose (such as grading individual performance), nor does it imply any particular method of evaluation (such as a written test), and nor does its outcomes automatically suggest that something is of greater value or importance than something else (such as Council of Europe activities in comparison with SALTO activities).

**ASSESSMENT** takes place when evaluation has a comparative dimension that involves setting individuals, activities or institutions into a ranking order of performance or achievement. The ranking may be set in relation to criteria that are specific to the context, process or outcomes that are being assessed (such as: who swam the river fastest, or which EVS agency has the highest success rate in attracting socially disadvantaged young people into the programme). Alternatively, relative performance may be assessed against an external standard (such as in the case of the PISA attainment tests for 15-year-olds in different countries).

**FORMATIVE EVALUATION OR ASSESSMENT** refers to a dynamic process over time, which tries to capture the developmental dimensions of learning, performance and achievement. It records the pathways and the changes between two points in time, with the primary accent on what lies between those points and how the journey has unfolded.

**SUMMATIVE EVALUATION OR ASSESSMENT** refers to assembling a picture of the outcomes of an activity in relation to the aims and purposes with which it began and/or in relation to a set of performance criteria that apply to all comparable activities. This kind of evaluation or assessment places the primary accent on comparing the starting and ending points of a process, but is less concerned with what happened along the way.

**STANDARDS AND QUALITY STANDARDS** are terms that can be used in several different ways. To say that an organisation uses standard methods of youth work might simply mean that it uses what the commentator judges to be the usual methods, that is, those used most commonly. The comment might well also convey the judgement that the methods in question are those generally recognised in the youth sector to be appropriate. This carries the suggestion that standard methods reflect professional norms, that is, they are seen to be good and valuable methods. At this point the term standards takes on a distinctive flavour, because it introduces the idea that some youth work methods are better than others (depending, of course, to some extent on the purpose and the participants). This raises the question of the bases for such quality judgements, which take the form of criteria, that is, attributes that should be present (or not present in some instances) if a particular youth work activity and its methods are to be seen as of good quality. The criteria that are applied are not necessarily the same for all cases, although some criteria may apply in all cases.

**CRITERION** referencing means to assess the type and level of service, experience or outcomes of youth work/education on the basis of a set of criteria external to the event, activity or achievement in question.



**NORMATIVE** referencing means to assess the type and level of service, experience or outcomes of youth work/education on the basis of the performance of all participants relative to each other.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES** are the results of a learning process, which may be expressed in a variety of ways. In fact, the outcomes that are recorded and measured at any one point in time are interim moments in a learning process, that is, a snapshot frame in a film (which could also run backwards).

**LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT OR ATTAINMENT** is somewhat more narrowly defined than when using the term ‘outcome’. These terms refer to the set of knowledge, skills and/or competences that an individual has acquired and is able to demonstrate at the end of a given learning process.

**CERTIFICATION** refers to a standardised process of formally validating knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences acquired by an individual or represented through a learning/service provider.

**CERTIFICATES OR DIPLOMAS** are the ‘piece of paper’ which record the outcome of the certification process. It most frequently has the status of an official document, but this is not an absolute prerequisite.

**CREDENTIAL** can simply be a synonym for a certificate or diploma, but it can also carry a wider meaning. The word credential is associated with the term credibility, which means to be believable, or something in which one can have confidence.

**QUALIFICATION** can also simply be a synonym for a certificate or diploma. In the world of formal education and training in Europe it is usually an official record or document testifying to the fact that a person has successfully completed a given course or reached a given standard of achievement for a specified field, skill or competence.

**ACCREDITATION:** formally or socially recognised authorities or instances accredit courses, activities and their outcomes. This means they testify that organisations and individuals meet standards to which all have agreed to conform. They vouch for the credibility of the certificates and diplomas that are issued, and hence for the reliability and validity of the monitoring, evaluation and assessment of the individuals and the organisations whose judgements are given the stamp of approval.

**ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR EXPERIENCE AND LEARNING (APEL)** refers to the application of some kind of formal recognition to the knowledge, skills or competences that individuals have acquired in non-formal and informal ways during the course of their lives.

**VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL/INFORMAL LEARNING:** APEL is one way of validating non-formal and informal learning, that is, evaluating (possibly assessing) and recognising learning progress and outcomes. In the world of research methodology, the adjective ‘valid’ means that there is an accurate link between a theoretical concept (an idea) and its empirical indicator (a measurable observation).

More simply, this means we assume, in good faith and with reasonable confidence, that something we can observe (and perhaps measure) in real life does genuinely reflect an idea in our heads.

**VALUING LEARNING:** to value learning may simply mean that one thinks that learning as such is a good thing. More precisely, it refers to the process of encouraging participation in learning of all kinds and making its outcomes visible, so that (more) people and society as a whole become more aware that learning is an intrinsically worthwhile activity and thus to enhance the rewards that learning brings.

**SOCIAL RECOGNITION** points to the status and esteem (‘feel good factor’) that individuals, organisations or sectors receive as a consequence of displaying certain characteristics, reaching certain achievements or engaging in certain activities – such as learning. It might also extend to material rewards, such as higher incomes for those with higher level qualifications.

**CODIFIED RECOGNITION:** for education and training purposes, regardless of sector and level, this term specifies a formal and often official (including legal) recognition of learning participation or outcomes, such as a certificate or a diploma.

## PEOPLE INVOLVED

**LEARNING PROVIDERS** are organisations or a set of institutionalised arrangements that deliver learning, that is, that manage and monitor the provision of courses of some kind, whether formal or non-formal. Learning providers may also design and/or execute the courses they offer, and they may operate in either the public or the private sector. They may or may not be subject to some form of state or professional regulation to assure quality and standards.

**LEARNING FACILITATOR** is a new term that aims to establish an inclusive word for all those who shape, guide and accompany the learning process, regardless of the sector in which they work and the kind of learning involved.

**TRAINER** is the word traditionally used to refer to those who shape, guide and accompany learning processes in the initial and continuing vocational education and training sectors. They most typically work in vocational schools and colleges, both public and private, in company-run training units or at the workplace itself. They may also staff vocational tracks or subjects in general education institutions, and they could work in ‘second chance’-type projects that aim to integrate disadvantaged or unemployed young people or (older) adults into the labour market.

**TEACHER** is the word traditionally used to refer to those who shape, guide and accompany learning processes in schools, colleges and – to some extent – higher education. They may teach vocational subjects, but it is not common to use the word ‘teacher’ for those who work in company-based contexts.

**TUTOR** is a term that is sometimes used as a synonym for teacher, but generally it connotes someone whose pastoral role (looking after someone’s overall personal well-being) is at least as important as a purely teaching/training role.

**MENTORING** is a structured process for providing personal guidance and support to someone who is younger, less experienced or new to the game – whatever the context may be, but most commonly in education, training and employment contexts. Mentors act as critical but non-judgemental friends, provide a role model and a source of useful information and advice, and can take on a coaching task (helping to improve performance). They may be freely chosen, but may also be allocated using a set of matching criteria. Formal mentoring programmes are likely to specify a given time-period for the mentoring relationship.

**YOUTH TRAINERS** are people who train others to work with young people, using non-formal methods, focusing on personal and social development and with an emphasis on fostering intercultural competence.

**YOUTH WORKERS** are people who work with young people in a wide variety of non-formal and informal contexts, typically focusing on personal and social development through one-to-one relationships and in group-based activities. Being learning facilitators may be their main task, but it is at least as likely that youth workers take a social pedagogic or directly social work based approach. In many cases, these roles and functions are combined with each other.

## TYPES OF LEARNING

**FORMAL LEARNING** is purposive learning that takes place in a distinct and institutionalised environment specifically designed for teaching/training and learning, which is staffed by learning facilitators who are specifically qualified for the sector, level and subject concerned and which usually serves a specified category of learners (defined by age, level and specialism). Learning aims are almost always externally set, learning progress is usually monitored and assessed, and learning outcomes are usually recognised by certificates or diplomas. Much formal learning provision is compulsory (school education).

**NON-FORMAL LEARNING** is purposive but voluntary learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations for which teaching/training and learning is not necessarily their sole or main activity. These environments and situations may be intermittent or transitory, and the activities or courses that take place may be staffed by professional learning facilitators (such as youth trainers) or by volunteers (such as youth leaders). The activities and courses are planned, but are seldom structured by conventional rhythms or curriculum subjects. They usually address specific target groups, but rarely document or assess learning outcomes or achievements in conventionally visible ways.

**INFORMAL LEARNING:** from the learner's standpoint at least, this is non-purposive learning which takes place in everyday life contexts in the family, at work, during leisure and in the community. It does have outcomes, but these are seldom recorded, virtually never certified and are typically neither immediately visible for the learner nor do they count in themselves for education, training or employment purposes. APEL systems are one way in which the outcomes of such learning can be made more visible and hence open to greater recognition.

**OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL)** combines two distinct categories of learning provision and participation which frequently occur together. Open learning is purposive learning that takes place where, when and how the learner chooses. It may also be self-directed learning, that is, the learner also voluntarily chooses what and why to learn. Open learning may be formal or non-formal in character. Distance learning covers the spectrum from correspondence learning ('by post') to eLearning (IT supported learning, whether as content, pedagogy or medium). It may or may not be designed as open learning, and can include highly formalised and closely assessed types of learning processes and outcomes.



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