

Innovations

Open Youth Work's
Contribution to Non-
Formal Education



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Edited by
Andrew Cummings



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ECYC
Tigergarden
Norregade 77, 6
Postboks 109
5100 Odense C
Denmark
Tel: +45 6547 2169
Fax: +45 7027 0054
Email: ecycdk@centrum.dk

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Acknowledgements

This publication highlights a number of youth work projects, carried out by youth work organisations across Europe. A special thanks goes to the following organisations for their help and support in preparing and producing this publication:

Federation of Youth Clubs in Armenia (FYCA) is a national network of youth clubs and projects in Armenia, which advocates the benefits of open youth work, promoting co-operation between youth organisations and clubs, and increasing international awareness and co-operation among young people. They are observer members of ECYC, YEE and the National Youth Council of Armenia.

VFJ is the federation of youth clubs in Flanders, Belgium. VFJ seeks to distribute and reinforce youth club methodology and Open Youth Work. They do this by publishing magazines, brochures and websites; organising

training; and defending the interests of youth clubs at regional, national and international levels. They are members of ECYC, the Flemish Youth Council, and the General Assembly of the National Agency (JINT).

Narva Youth Centre aims to develop and co-ordinate youth work in the city of Narva, Estonia. They work closely within the network of the city's Education Department. They are a member of the Estonian Open Youth Centre Union (EANK) and the Narva City Child and Youth Defence Commission.

Finnish Federation of Settlement Youth Associations (SETNL) is a national umbrella organisation for youth work associations in Finland, working with its 8 affiliate organisations and 42 local youth societies to organise clubs, camps, and a wide range of other activities. SETNL is a member of the Nordic youth club network UFN, ECYC and Allianssi, the National Youth Council of Finland.

Fédération Française des Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture (FFMJC) was established in 1944, to set up educational and cultural projects of training for the citizens of France for the restoration of the Republic. Today, FFMJC provides assistance with project management to MJC's (youth and culture clubs) to assist them in implementing local projects. They also provide project development and the development of skills for volunteers and professionals involved in MJC's. FFMJC are a member of ECYC.

Russian Union of Youth (RUY) is a non-governmental youth organization founded in 1990. RUY has its regional offices in 75 regions of Russia, and involves more than one million young people in its programmes each year. RUY seeks to develop young people by implementing programs that let young people expand their range of vision and interests, and help them define their life choices. RUY are members of ECYC, EYCA and the National Youth Council of Russia.

Our Children was created in 1992 in Ukraine, and seeks to promote healthy

lifestyles for children and young people. They run a wide range of activities including prevention programmes and the promotion of youth rights. They also seek to help build civil society in Ukraine. Our Children is a member of ECYC and of the European Forum for Child Welfare (EFCW).

UK Youth is the largest non-uniformed National voluntary youth organisation in the United Kingdom, with a network comprising 41 member organisations representing the major county and metropolitan areas in England, as well as national youth club organisations in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. The network comprises over 6,000 local youth groups, clubs and projects involving 750,000 young people between 14 to 25, as well as over 40,000 volunteers and part time youth workers.

Foreword

Open Youth Work has a varied history across Europe. In some countries, there is a strong tradition of youth clubs and projects stretching back nearly one hundred years, and is well recognised by governments, institutions and the society at large. Yet in other parts of Europe, youth work is a very recent development, which is still largely unrecognised and unsupported.



Yet despite these differences, there are very exciting things happening all across Europe. As this publication highlights, Open Youth Work is providing young people with exciting opportunities to spend their leisure time learning new skills, meeting new people, and having their attitudes, beliefs and experiences challenged in order to help them develop as well-rounded citizens of Europe.

One of the difficulties for Open Youth Work, and youth organisations generally, is the perception by many individuals and institutions that all we do is "play" with young people and keep them off the streets. Although having fun is central to the activities we provide, youth organisations across Europe are seriously tackling many of the social issues in our communities today, such as racism, intolerance and social exclusion.

Since being founded in 1976, the European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC) has worked with its members to develop good practice in Open Youth Work. We regularly come together in order to share examples and ideas, and create projects which allow young people and youth workers from countries across Europe to compare and contrast their experiences.

We are very excited to produce this publication, highlighting the contribution of Open Youth Work to the Non-Formal Education of young people in Europe. I hope that it provides inspiration to others to continue to develop exciting and innovative projects for young people.

Nonna Lemola
President
ECYC

Introduction

In recent years there has been a growing recognition of the role and importance of Non-Formal Education, in providing people with skills and learning opportunities that Formal Education is unable to provide. This has evolved as part of a broader move to recognise and promote the value of life-long learning, both to the individuals who take part, and to society as a whole.

In *Building Bridges for Learning* (1999) the European Youth Forum states that "the term non-formal education is not a new one. It was introduced in the late 1960s in order to signal the need for out-of-school responses to the new and differing demands for education." The report goes on to state that "unlike schools, youth organisations tend to be free from beliefs, assumptions and ways of doing things that are a heritage from the past".

Increasingly, formal and non-formal education providers are working together, and learning from each other. Evidence of this is given in several of the projects outlined in this publication. This is in keeping with the European Commission's *Communication on Lifelong Learning*, which talks about "the newly-coined term "lifewide" learning (which) enriches the picture by drawing attention to the spread of

learning, which takes place across the full range of our lives in any one stage of our lives. The "lifewide" dimension brings the complementarity of formal, non-formal and informal learning into sharper focus".

Although this increase in the recognition of the importance of non-formal learning is a fairly recent phenomenon, youth organisations have been involved in the non-formal education of young people for many years. ECYC, for example, has been advocating and promoting the benefits of Open Youth Work since it was established in 1976, and many of its member organisations were doing so for many years, and in some cases many decades, before this.

Within Europe, there is a great deal of diversity with regard to youth work traditions and ways of working, from country to country. In some countries, youth work has existed for many decades and has an accepted role in society. In other countries, youth work is a very new practice, and is largely unknown amongst the general population. Yet despite this diversity, there are exciting and innovative projects emerging throughout Europe. As the projects highlighted in this publication show, Open Youth Work is as dynamic in the more "established"

countries as it is in places where youth work has only emerged in the past decade.

This diversity means there is much to be learned by sharing ideas and experiences. Within ECYC, this flow of information is very much multi-dimensional. The more established countries learn as much from the energy and vigour of the "newer" countries, as the newer countries do from the experience of the established ones. It is this sharing that keeps our members coming up with new and exciting ideas.



This publication brings together some examples of these innovative projects from eight countries in Europe – both the "established" and the "new". Our aim is to highlight the contribution that youth organisations generally, and Open Youth Work specifically, have made to the non-formal education of young people.

All of the projects described here involve young people in every level and phase of their development – from conception to implementation, and through to evaluation. It is this approach that maximises the potential for learning, as well as helping to develop young people as "active citizens". It is our hope that in reading about these projects, you will be inspired to consider new ways to involve young people in developing the Europe of tomorrow.

Andrew Cummings
Secretary General
ECYC

What is ECYC?

The European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC) is an international non-governmental youth organisation that was formed in 1976. The goals of the organisation are to:

- Advocate and promote the benefits of Open Youth Work
- Promote co-operation between Open Youth Work organisations across Europe
- Increase international awareness amongst young people
- Provide seminars, training courses and programmes of youth exchange
- Encourage the active involvement of young people in their communities

clubs, groups and projects in 24 countries of Europe – from Cyprus in the south to Greenland in the north.

ECYC offers its members a wide range of projects and activities, including young people's seminars, training for youth workers, international projects and initiatives, networking meetings on topics of common interest, promotion of best practice, development of policy guidelines relevant to Open Youth Work and so on.

ECYC works closely with other youth organisations and agencies, and is a member of the European Youth Forum, as well as having consultative status with the Council of Europe.

Today, the ECYC network consists of more than 3.5 million young people, who are involved in more than 18 000 youth



What is Open Youth Work?

Since being formed in 1976, the European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC) has worked to promote good practice in Open Youth Work in Europe. In order to develop good practice, it was important to start by deciding on a common definition of this concept we call "Open Youth Work". This is a summary of the definition that the first members of ECYC developed together:

The Role of Open Youth Work:

The purpose of Open Youth Work is to offer young people, on the basis of their voluntary involvement, developmental and educational experiences which will equip them to play an active part in democratic society, as well as meet their own needs. Open Youth Work takes place in youth clubs, youth projects, youth houses, on the street – wherever young people are to be found.

Open Youth Work offers young people opportunities which are:

Educative – enabling young people to gain skills, knowledge and attitudes needed as individuals and members of groups and communities;

Designed to promote equality of opportunity – through the challenging of oppressions which result from differences in culture, race, language, sexual identity, gender, disability, age, religion and class, and through the celebration of diversity which arise from these differences;

Participative – through a voluntary relationship with young people which encourages their involvement in the decision making structures which affect their lives;

Empowering – by supporting young people to understand and act on the personal, social and political issues that affect their lives, the lives of others and the communities of which they are part.



The Core Values of Open Youth Work are:

- Young people have the right to identify options and choices and choose the most appropriate one for them in any given situation
- Each young person should be given the support they need to reach their full potential
- Young people should be supported to develop their own values and attitudes and develop the capacity to critically analyse the world around them and to take action in response.



The Characteristics of Open Youth Work are:

- A planned, systematic educational experience outside the formal education curriculum
- An active model of learning which promotes experiential learning and reflection in real life situations
- Recognises that inequalities of opportunity exist in society and seeks to raise young people's awareness about society and how to act upon it
- It is based on the issues and areas of interest of young people themselves
- It is mutually beneficial, enjoyable and fun for both youth workers / youth leaders and young people
- It is a partnership between youth workers / youth leaders and young people, based on the active participation of young people
- It provides opportunities for young people to participate in decision making, planning, organising and evaluating
- It enable communities to work towards meeting the needs of their own people
- Is accessible to young people regardless of their race, culture, creed, gender, sexual orientation and disability

Project Descriptions



Youth Achievements Awards United Kingdom

United Kingdom

Youth Achievement Awards

The Youth Achievement Awards programme was first developed for *UK Youth* in 1996, and was piloted in various locations of the United Kingdom in 1997. Since then, the programme has spread to over 800 youth groups. The Awards provide a framework for accrediting young people's achievements in their informal and non-formal learning, through their involvement in youth work programmes, volunteering and active citizenship.

They are targeted at all young people aged between 14 and 25, and are accredited by an officially recognised, external Awarding Body - ASDAN. Unlike most other Awards of this type, there are no fixed activities that the young person must complete in order to achieve an Award. Instead young people are encouraged to consider what is a challenge for them personally and to explore the learning objectives or targets that they, personally, wish to gain from completing the activity.

The Awards come at 4 levels – Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum. The levels represent young people taking progressively more responsibility for planning and organising activities, for themselves and their peers. At the Bronze level, young people simply take

part in activities, and give evidence of social skills they have gained by doing so. At the Silver level, they help to plan and organise the activities they wish to take part in. At Gold level, they take full responsibility for planning, organising and leading the activities. The Platinum level of the Award is aimed at youth leaders or peer educators. At this level, the candidates are involved in training and delivering youth work programmes and activities for other young people. Each of the levels is linked to the development of social and personal skills, as shown in the "Curriculum Development Model", developed by youth work consultant John Huskins.

Recently, UK Youth have developed a new award, called the Youth Challenges programme. This is similar to the Youth Achievement Awards, but is aimed at a younger group - young people aged 11 to 14. It is intended as an introduction to the principles of participative, self-directed learning in informal and non-formal environments.

Central to the Youth Achievement Awards is the concept of peer support and peer assessment. Young people form what is called an "Award Group". The purpose of the group is to provide each other with support to plan, do and

review the 'challenges' and 'targets' that they set themselves. Young people collect evidence to demonstrate their achievements and present this in a portfolio of evidence.

Through participation in the Awards, young people are encouraged to build their social skills, such as negotiation, problem solving, planning and reviewing. They are also encouraged to develop their study skills, including literacy and IT skills. However, the Awards are flexible enough to enable young people with literacy problems or with learning disabilities to take part, because young people are able to provide "evidence" for their portfolios in a wide variety of ways.

This can include photos, videos, drawings, testimonials from others and so on. This has made the Awards particularly popular with young people who have not achieved qualifications in formal education settings.

Although there are other awards in UK that recognise non-formal and informal learning, the Youth Achievement Awards are unique because they are the only UK-based Awards that are both

externally accredited to national standards, and which do not have set activities or learning outcomes, which are required in order for young people to achieve an award. The programme is also unique in that young people are being assessed on their levels of participation and involvement, rather

Curriculum Development Model



copyright John Huskins (after Gloucestershire Youth and Community Service)

than on the knowledge or skills acquired.

Since being launched in the four countries of the United Kingdom – Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England – the Youth Achievement Awards programme has also spread to the Republic of Ireland and Iceland. It is also being used by the youth services of the UK armed forces bases in Germany and Cyprus. Approximately 16,000 young people are currently involved in

the programme. Last year 2,700 young people achieved an accredited Award as a result of their involvement in the programme.

On a local level, young people are involved in setting their own challenges and targets and by participating in the Award Group to support and assess other young people's Awards. Many local and regional organisations that now use the Youth Achievement Awards have developed their own methods for ensuring that young people are involved in the planning and running of the Awards. Often, young people who are working towards their Gold and Platinum level Awards provide support to young people who are working towards their Youth Challenges or Bronze Awards.

By recognising and celebrating achievements, the Youth Achievement Awards are a huge motivating factor, by engaging young people in their own learning processes. The Awards challenge young people to further their non-formal and informal learning, and to broaden their experiences of learning. They also encourage an approach to learning that is vital to achieving in more formal education settings. This approach is also a useful skill for life in general.

The project has received financial support from various funding providers in the years since it began. These include the National Lottery and Accenture - an

international consultancy firm - as well as other trust funds and corporate sponsors. Most significantly, the Awards have recently been funded to enable disabled young people to access the programme, with financial support from the Community Fund. However, the long term strategy is to make the Awards self-sufficient, by generating income through training, a registration fee to use the Awards, and sales of materials such as work booklets and videos which explain the Awards in more details. This income will enable the on-going support and development of the programme.

The most significant outcome of the Awards programme is that several thousand young people each year have their informal and non-formal learning recognised, and develop a vast array of skills in the process. The Awards also provide a great tool for encouraging good youth work practice, by ensuring that youth workers and



youth leaders are actively engaging young people in their programme of activities, and encouraging young people to take progressively more responsibility for planning and organising these. Gradually, the Youth Achievement Awards are achieving a much higher profile within the youth work and education community, and are often mentioned as an example of good practice in government documentation relating to initiatives for young people.

The Youth Achievement Awards have also had a significant impact on *UK Youth* as an organisation, as it is now the most widely used programme they offer. The organisation also subscribes to the Curriculum Development Model, and reflects this in other work that it does with young people. Through the Awards, *UK Youth* has direct contact with many national youth work agencies, as well as most statutory (government run) youth services, and a broad range of organisations working with young people.

UK Youth have learnt a lot over the last few years as a result of developing and running the Youth Achievement Awards programme. In order to establish credibility in the accreditation field, they have had to invest a significant amount of time and money into the process. They have also learnt that the Awards programme isn't static, and that things like support materials and booklets need

constant developing, updating and reviewing. This evaluation process has been on going, and must involve both the young people and the youth work agencies that use the programme.

Since the Awards began, UK Youth have gathered a "mountain" of anecdotal evidence, about the success of the programme and the ways it has benefited thousands of young people. However, in the near future they are hoping to find sufficient funding to enable them to thoroughly research the achievements and impact of the Awards with individual young people, and the contribution the Awards are making to youth work and informal and non-formal learning.

Case Study 1: HEY MR DJ...

"Selecting", "spinning" and "scratching" were just a few of the many skills recognised in July 2003 when eighteen young people received Silver and Bronze Youth Achievement Awards in DJ-ing skills at Wythenshawe YMCA in Greater Manchester, England.

Members of the DJ group, which includes young people aged 13-16 years, have all been permanently excluded from school and hence now attend the YMCA for their lessons. The youth workers were keen that the effort they put into learning to be a DJ was recognised through formal accreditation, and chose the Youth Achievement



"Young people spin for their YAAs at Wythenshawe YMCA."

Awards as the most appropriate method of doing this.

Youth worker Jeff Haskins, said of his youth group: "There has been a huge benefit to the young people who have gained their Youth Achievement Awards on the DJ project. They have become far more self-confident and have much improved self-esteem. This could well be the boost they need."

CASE STUDY 2: INTEGRATING DEAF CHILDREN AT HEARING SCHOOLS

Yen Hai Lieu is a Lord Mayor's Award Holder on a programme called "activ8" which is supported by funding from the London Lord Mayor's Appeal. Yen is one of just a dozen young people - all of whom were facing poverty or social

exclusion - selected to become leaders in their communities and to act as role models to others. Each Award holder develops and runs their own project, which aim to make a difference to other young lives, whilst at the same time working towards their Youth Achievement Award.

Yen works as a volunteer with the National Deaf Children's Society, and has set up her own project working with deaf children in "hearing" schools. The project aims to encourage deaf and hearing children to work better together, get on with each other and try to combat bullying.

She said: "I gained such a lot from the YAA and it actually helped me make my project better. I'm just amazed at all the different skills I had to develop in order to gain the qualification. YAA is definitely worth having, and having a certificate and some accredited learning is great. YAA has given me the confidence to work with colleagues and communicate better with others."

Meikäpoika Project Finland

Meikäpoika Project

Boys and Young Men - Finland

The Meikäpoika Project was developed by the Finnish Federation of Settlement Youth Association (SETNL) in order to focus on boys, and to explore and address their specific needs and problems, support the development of their self esteem, and help them with to develop positive life strategies. The project also aimed to develop and highlight positive examples of manhood – helping young men to develop their own balanced way of growing up into men.

The Meikäpoika-project aimed to work with fathers, youth workers, social workers and teachers. The project was run across Finland, with about 150 boys involved in small groups, and about 100 involved in father-and-son activities. The project ran over three years, starting in 2001 and finishing at the end of 2003.

As a nation-wide project, SETNL delivered the programme in partnership with their local associations. SETNL was responsible for co-ordinating the programme and the overall activities, and supporting the local associations carrying out the project groups at the local level. The project was funded with the financial support of the Finnish Slot Machine Association (RAY).

The Meikäpoika-project continues a trend in developing gender specific youth work by SETNL. This began in 1998-2000, when they developed and ran a project called Upea Minä, or "Gorgeous Me", which was aimed at girls and young women. After the success of that project, it seemed natural to shift the focus to boys and young men for the following three-year period.

Gender specific youth work for boys is a new approach in Finland. Topics such as emotions, feelings and low self esteem are not much spoken about when it comes to Finnish boys. Also, activities like closed small groups for boys, and father-and-son groups have not been used before in youth work programmes. Young people are fully involved in the development of the project, through planning and running the project groups and youth clubs.

The boys and young men involved in the project groups had lots of problems and difficulties in their everyday lives. In the Helsinki groups, for example, almost every boy was also a client of the child protection department. For this reason, co-operation with social workers and teachers was very important. Because of those connections, SETNL had an opportunity to collect information about the boys' lives in their families, at school and in other parts of their lives.

It was also very important that the boys who took part felt valued and cared about by the youth workers. This contributed to them developing positive feelings and having worthwhile experiences as a result of being involved in the project groups.

The groups took part in a wide variety of activities. Sometimes they just "hung around" together, with nothing special happening – just chatting and enjoying each other's company. Sometimes they cooked together. They also used different sports' methods, such as adventure programmes, hiking etc.



One significant outcome of the project was the development of a new sexual education programme aimed specifically at boys and young men. This was innovative in that it focused particularly on how to express their feelings and emotions, which is a new approach to exploring sexual issues with boys. This has led to the production of a compact disc (CD) and a booklet, focusing on this

work.

Also, a series of seminars were held around Finland, which concentrated on boys' issues. These proved very popular among youth workers, social workers and teachers, and highlighted the fact that this area of work has been neglected in the past. The project has also led to new research about boys in Finnish society.

The Meikäpoika project, along with the previous "Gorgeous Me" project, have led to the development of a large degree of knowledge and expertise in gender specific youth work in Finland. It has helped SETNL to develop as a creative organisation, and they have been very successful in sharing new ideas and information with youth workers across Finland.

Some important learning has emerged as a result of the project. Firstly, SETNL believe that three years is not enough time for a project like this. They have also found that it is vital for the whole organisation to stand behind and support such projects, rather than just being left to one project manager. It is also important to create an attitude and environment that allows people to make mistakes, and to fail at times. It is only when we allow people to feel free to make mistakes that we can truly try new things and learn from them!

“Club Exit” Youth Cafe Estonia

"Club Exit" Youth Café

of opening a café for young people came to a group of youngsters from the city of Narva, Estonia, while they were participating in a youth exchange with a local youth group in England. When they arrived back in Estonia, the young people from "V.P.Group" began to develop their idea and initiated the project with the help of the Narva Youth Centre.

The Club Exit Café opened in October 2001. The work was organised by the young people from V.P.Group, along with volunteers from the Narva Youth Parliament. Club Exit Café has now been opening its doors to the young people of Narva for over two years. There are new volunteers helping around the cafe, and every year there is a new start for this long-term project. The café-club was the first project in the city of Narva to use an Open Youth Work approach and methods.

The café is an innovative project in Estonia, as it was the first of its kind to be set up and run by and for young people themselves, using an Open Youth Work approach. Young people were involved in every aspect of the project from the very beginning. The young people from V.P Group came up with the

concept of the youth café. They were involved in planning and writing the funding applications. They have gone on to develop various activities and organise various events. The young people themselves decide the rules in



Club Exit cafe, and it is them who take care of the every day life of the café. In every way, it is a true young people's initiative!

In October each year, the young people meet together to make an Action Plan for the coming season. There is at least one event every month, although some years are more active with two or more activities each month. Some of these follow particular themes, such as the International Day of Volunteering (5th December). At other times, the activities follow topics in which local youngsters are interested, such as body-art, bodybuilding, nail art, piercing, and so on. Usually they invite specialists in the chosen field, who talk about how to do these things safely and properly. Then there are DJ parties, organised by different youth groups, and sessions on

break dance, rap and so on. Young volunteers also prepare different activities for smaller children, such as at Halloween.

By being involved in organising such activities, the young people learn a wide variety of skills and lessons. They learn about the importance of team work in reaching goals and achieving results; they learn to be tolerant and accepting of each other, and they learn to communicate clearly and effectively.

All young people in Narva are welcome at the Club Exit Café. There are now several different youth groups involved in the running of the project. This includes youth workers, volunteers, the Narva Youth Parliament and informal youth groups.

The café was established with funding from a range of sources. These include a grant from the YOUTH Programme of the European Union (Action 3), the Hansa bank, the Ministry of Education and Science in Estonia, and the council of Narva City.

One of the most significant outcomes of the project is that it has led to the opening of several others centres for young people based on the same methods. Another important result of the project is that Narva Youth Centre, where this café-club is based, have learned a great deal from the

experience. The café has proven a great tool in reaching young people, who were not previously involved in their activities, and involving young people in the process of taking important steps to develop youth work in Narva City. In many cases, this has been the first step for them in becoming active in their community, and in society generally.

Klaus Compagnie France

Klaus Compagnie

Klaus Compagnie is a contemporary dance company that works with both disabled and able-bodied dancers. The company was founded in 1991, and began working with disabled people in 1999. Their work involves researching and creating original choreographed dance productions that integrate disabled and able-bodied dancers, aged 12 and over.

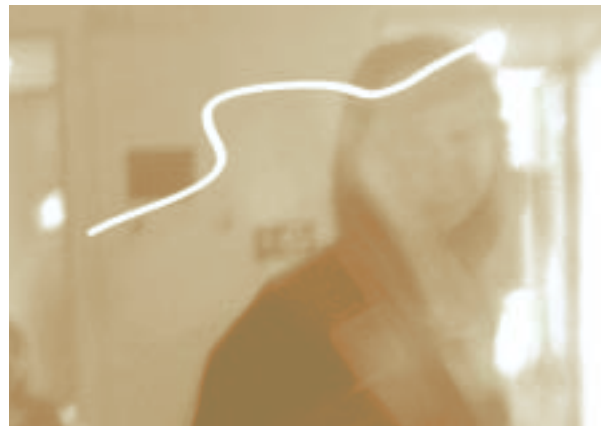
The company aims at democratising contemporary dance, giving both able-bodied and disabled people the opportunity to take part in an artistic and cultural activity, based on mutual respect, tolerance and open-mindedness.

Klaus Compagnie runs workshop tours, that have been organised in places like youth and culture clubs (maisons des jeunes et de la culture), social centres, and specialised institutions for the disabled. They are also concerned with mixing both disabled and able-bodied audiences.

Their stage performances and media coverage - on television and in the press - have turned their work into a 'reference': a unique experience where both able-bodied and disabled people have come together to work in an art form such as dancing. Their workshops

and training sessions are now increasingly in demand.

Around a hundred young people are directly involved in the dance company. In addition to this, they reach many hundreds of young people who form the audiences of their dance tours. The company began as a local project, and has spread to a wider and wider area of France. They hope to have a national presence across France in the near future.



It is the mingling of both able-bodied and disabled people that makes the project so innovative. However, they also insist on a high degree of professionalism and precision – and high quality work is the end result. Ultimately they would like to spread their influence, and see able-bodied and disabled people perform together in other cultural and artistic activities such as theatre, music...



Young people who take part in the workshops are artists in their own right. They work mainly on improvising with disabled dancers. Every year a performance is organised, which brings together all the workshop participants. In July 2001, this led to a two-week training session, that united all participants in order to set up a show that was performed in October and November of that year.

As well as encouraging young people to learn the artistic technique of contemporary dance, the project enhances non-formal learning by promoting concepts and notions of citizenship, mutual respect, tolerance and socialisation. Young people come to realise the need for open-mindedness, in order to bring people out of their "ghettos". Mutual aid and support are an undeniable element of the project, and demand a degree of self-denial in order to further real exchanges between the participants, and also with audiences. It

gives able-bodied people another perspective of the world of disabled people, and vice-versa. The experience has also had therapeutic effects, and has helped to "un-discriminate" audiences. Klaus Compagnie's work insists on the right to be different, whilst retaining human dignity.

Although their workshops and performances are increasingly in demand, they are often unable to meet all of these requests due to a lack of financial support. Despite the success and publicity, the Compagnie has no significant funding, no permanent staff, no properly adapted facilities. However, they are currently in the process of rationalising the organisation in order to improve access for all audiences.

Because they are forerunners in this field, official institutions, although highly interested, are still over-



cautious in terms of funding. Things are changing – but slowly, and not to a large enough extent just yet.

However, they have the satisfaction of having achieved their goal, ensuring that combining dance and disability is no longer a dream, but a fact of life. Of course, this is not yet the case for everyone. There is still a long way to go, in order for this kind of experience to continue to gain ground.

Klaus Compagnie are in touch with a number of towns and organisations, in order to help them harmonise their work. They are working in partnership with FFMJC (the French Federation of youth and cultural clubs), FRMJC (the regional federation of youth and culture clubs), Handicap International and others. Such an ambitious project needs a high degree of funding, and ideally the creation of paid, professional positions. But in the meantime, the experience has been so enriching in terms of human relationships. This gives them the energy and enthusiasm to keep fighting in order to make sure their work continues to grow.



European Citizenship and Youth Policy Armenia

European Citizenship and Youth Policy

Whilst on a Training Course on European citizenship at the European Youth Centre in Budapest, a group of young people from four former Communist republics – Armenia, Georgia, Russia and Romania - met for the first time. During the training course, the young people decided that they needed a joint project on European Citizenship and Youth Policy, in order to discuss issues, which were common to these countries, yet unique to their region of the world.

The first preparatory meeting actually took place right there in Budapest, where the preliminary programme was designed and agreed. The Federation of Youth Clubs of Armenia (FYCA) took responsibility for organising the event, since it was to take place in their capital city, Yerevan.

The group, consisting of 20 young people aged between 18 and 30, applied for funding to hold a study visit, where together they would explore European citizenship and youth policy in post-Soviet countries. The issue of youth policy was addressed by:

- visiting youth structures - governmental and non-governmental organisations in the youth field,

- talking to Local Authorities, Deputy Ministers, Heads of Government Departments,

- getting acquainted with local funding sources for youth - first researching and then visiting them.

In order to address the issue of European citizenship, they organised:

- guest speakers on citizenship issues and legal matters from the Ministry of Justice,

- Talks from media representatives.

The study visit was made possible through funding from the European Youth Foundation, the Federation of Youth Clubs in Armenia, and the Ministry of Culture and Youth of Republic of Armenia. The study visit was innovative because it was the first time that young people from these post - Communist countries came together to explore the issues of citizenship generally, and of European citizenship specifically. The project involved exploring the role and responsibilities of young people in these areas, and looked at specific examples and new approaches within youth organisations. The whole project was designed, prepared and administered by

young people, all of whom are either volunteers or staff of the partner organisations involved.

The methods used to address these issues included working groups, meetings, and interactive discussions. The participants also distributed information on the funding opportunities that they were aware of, and time was set aside to design and agree on some future projects and follow-up activities. Five such projects were discussed. Already two of these have been written up as funding applications, and sent to different funding bodies in order to gain the financing to carry them out. Participants witnessed some very well set structures and principles to work

with, and this has inspired them to be involved in an on-going way.

As a result of this project, FYCA, as the hosting organisation for the study visit, has grown stronger and more experienced. They have broadened their contacts within the youth structures in Armenia, and have also had the chance to develop some very good ideas for future projects.

They have also gained experience in organising an international activity involving more than two countries, hosting and preparing the program and activities within them, dealing with ticket and visa problems, and so on.



“The Mayor and Me” Ukraine

“The Mayor and Me”

"The Mayor and Me" project was devised by YEC and Our Children in order to help teach young people between the ages of 14 and 17 about democracy, youth participation and active citizenship.

The project began on 26th of June, 2003, when the first Forum of Youth was held in the Ukrainian city of Odessa. One of the results of the forum was that the young participants from schools said that they are not satisfied by their level of understanding of the processes involved in local government decision making. The participants of the Forum stated that "99% of their peers don't understand how local governance works".

In order to address this lack of understanding amongst young people, the forum delegates initiated the creation of a special role-play game for school students. Using a method developed by YEC, the delegates initiated a special decree from the Mayor for creating the game and using it with students in 130 schools in Odessa. The young people designed the game in a way that they felt was the best solution to interest young people in issues of local governance.

To implement the project, working groups were established. These groups took the roles of local government officials, specialists of the role-play games, and youth experts from various youth NGOs. In each of the 130 schools, between 30 and 40 young people took part in the role plays, leading to a total involvement of over 4000 young people. The project ran for four months, from the initial concept through to the running of the role play games across all 130 schools.

The funding for the project was provided from various sources. Volunteers from local NGOs offered their time and energy free of charge. Specialists were brought in and paid for from the local authority budget, and the organisational costs were covered by Our Children. Unfortunately, they have not yet managed to attract any specific grants to continue the development of the project.

The project culminated in a final role-play game, which was held in the City Council chambers, and was run like a working meeting of the Executive Committee of the City Council. Each of the main roles in the ECCC were there including the Mayor of the city, and along side them were their "twins" – the young people involved in the role play. Only the



young people had the right to speak, whilst the ECCC members were there to act in a consultancy role to the young people. About 60 students from across Odessa were chosen for this exercise. They discussed the problems of municipal services, with a particular focus on building sustainability.

After the role-play game, the Mayor gave an order to develop a special course of lessons within the schools in Odessa, based on this game.

The young people who organised the project now plan to continue the partnership they have begun between youth and the local authorities. YEC and Our Children have now initiated negotiations with the Ministry of Education to continue the project, with support from the Ukrainian office of

UNICEF. They will also use this project to develop a partnership with the Ukrainian Association of Municipalities, in order to extend the project throughout Ukraine. Some of the Mayors from around Ukraine have already ordered information and materials from this project. The goal is to provide this course on a national level to all Municipalities. Negotiations for this are now underway. Throughout the project, young people were involved at every stage, and are now involved in the negotiations to further develop the project nationally.

Whilst the use of role-play games - and the involvement of young people in local governance - may not be innovative in parts of Europe, this approach was both new and useful for the young people of Odessa. The young people needed to learn about the way the local



government structures work, and this process was very useful in meeting their needs. Hopefully, this will lead to a real youth influence on the decision-making process at the local level in Odessa and across Ukraine.

In terms of the non-formal learning of the young people involved, the project was effective in motivating the young people to learn about, and take an interest in, issues of democracy and governance, and to encourage them to think about self-governance and the full involvement of youth in these areas. The next aim of the project is to increase the level of knowledge of the young people, and to continue to work at developing democracy, youth participation and active citizenship in ways that really interest young people.

One of the most significant outcomes of the project was the desire by the young players to create a Youth City Council, where they can not only continue to learn from role-play games, but also more effectively defend for the rights of young people.

At an organisational level, Our Children has learned a lot from this project. One lesson was the realisation that the local authorities are really just people after all. It also highlighted their awareness that many of the "specialists" never make enough time for negotiations with youth, and want to make quick solutions and

decisions, instead of actively and thoroughly involving youth. Young people have to be a partner at every stage, or else the learning from such non-formal processes is "killed".

Our Children believe that this project "is rather important for developing real democracy in Ukraine. It is through projects such as these that democracy will grow up". They enjoyed spreading information among youth, regarding the possibility for them to participate in the decision making process. And in addition to this, it was very useful to develop a process that was based on real youth participation.

Art-Profi Forum Programme Russia

Art-Profi Forum Programme

The Art-Profi Forum was developed with the aim of promoting the creative skills and abilities of young people, and stimulating the important social activities of students who are starting their professional technical education.

In Russia today, the most popular groups of young people are higher-education students and school children. Unfortunately, not much attention is given to technical school students. However, young people who are students at technical schools have:

- more social freedom compared to other students
- less social protection than higher-education students
- fewer opportunities for self-realisation
- the largest number of youngsters experiencing social exclusion

In order to address these issues, the Art-Profi Forum was established with the following aims:

- the involvement of students in the process of youth policy realization;

- arranging creative and positive leisure time activities for such students;

- creating a platform for dialogue amongst technical students at regional and national level;

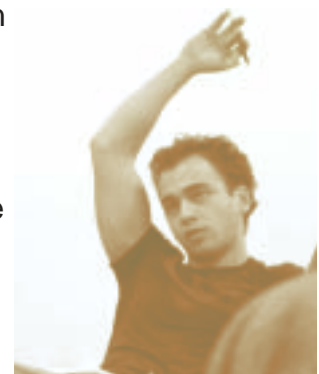
- promoting feelings of respect and pride for their choice of profession

- creating conditions for active social participation;

- stimulating the creation of youth organizations in order to achieve important social initiatives;

- the development of programmes of social activities within the technical institutions.

In order to achieve these goals, a number of steps were taken. Firstly, regional organizing committees were established. These committees would take the lead role in organising the activities of the project, in each of the regions of Russia. Once these committees were established, the organizational teams chose the



participants for the All-Russian Art-Profi Forum. This will ensure that young people have a very active voice in every aspect of the project as it develops.

As a result of the Forum being established, a number of activities have taken place. These include an exhibition of "social initiatives", a series of "round tables", a cultural programme and competitions for different creative groups, developing a "song about my profession", and showing videos about the successful realization of the social projects.

As a result of the Art-Profi Forum, the following results are expected:

- Creating a space for dialogue between technical school institutions at a regional and federal level;
- Drawing attention of state youth structures and public organizations to the problems of technical school

students.

- Creating interaction and cooperation in policy development for technical schools
- Broadening possibilities for personal development of technical students via their participation in the various projects of the programme
- Creating youth organisations in technical schools
- Publishing materials on the results of the programme

The project involves over 30 000 technical high schools in all 70 regions of the Russian Federation. It is expected that this will be a long-term project lasting several years.



Women for Peace- Building and Conflict Resolution South Caucasus Armenia

South Caucasus - Armenia

Women for Peace-Building and Conflict Resolution

This project involved a series of activities organised in all regions of Armenia. It included 20 training courses, plus seminars, round tables, meetings with local authorities, and follow up actions at the local level. A "training for trainers" course was also developed and run, on the theme of gender participation issues. The project led to the development of a gender issues network for NGOs and Government representatives.



The project evolved within the framework of the UNIFEM programme of the United Nations, under the national actions for Armenia. Over the past year, the Federation of Youth Clubs of Armenia (FYCA) had organised several projects for young women with UNIFEM support. The "Women for Peace-Building and Conflict Resolution" project came about as a follow up to these, in co-operation with local authorities and local youth groups. Following this, a coalition for all parts of the society was established, by uniting several youth groups.

The project events were aimed at young women and men between the ages of 18 and 30, who are involved in community development issues and programmes, and who have shown interest in gender issues. The participants included members of youth organisations from all over the country. In total, 450 young people participated in the events, over a period of ten months.

In a traditional society like Armenia, where the values are changing rapidly and the role of women is being revisited and re-designed, the project provided the opportunity to develop a new approach to on-going problems. The idea involved giving women the possibility to play a more significant role

in addressing conflict situations. This grew out of a response to the adoption of UN Resolution 1325, which encourages the participation of women in peace building initiatives. The resolution makes the realisation of such



a project even more important. The methods and approaches used within the project were quite new and challenging for FYCA and their partners.

Young people were pivotal to every aspect of the project. It was young people who designed, prepared and administered all aspects of the project, as volunteers of the organisations

involved. Also, all those who participated in the first stage of training courses were young people, and it was these people who also participated and ran the local projects.

As a result, each of the young participants was "learning by doing", and got the opportunity to realise an action at local level, and get assistance from the trainers in doing so. This developed considerable expertise in these issues at local, regional and national levels across Armenia.

"Women for Peace-Building and Conflict Resolution" was made possible through the support of a number of funding bodies. These included UNIFEM and the United Nations Development Programme; World Learning and USAID, and the Federation of Youth Clubs of Armenia's own resources.

The project also had a positive effect on FYCA at an organisational level. As a result of this project, many people learned about the organisation for the first time, and went on to get involved in the many activities that followed. FYCA also developed their experience in working with local youth groups, particularly those in rural areas. They have also learned that if a stronger civil society is to emerge in countries like Armenia, the role of all the members of the society has to be appreciated and utilised for the benefit of all.

Eastern Flanders Quality Management Project Belgium

Eastern Flanders Quality Management Project

The East Flanders Quality Project set out to provide quality input in youth clubs in an active way. Involvement in the project was voluntary to clubs which are members of the Flemish Federation of Youth Clubs (VFJ) – and 52 out of 79 clubs applied to be involved. Eastern Flanders is one of 10 provinces in Belgium, comprising of 65 municipalities with 79 youth-clubs.

Officially, the project started on August 1st 1999. However, at this stage, VFJ had been working on it for at least a year, developing the project. This work involved staff members of VFJ, local authorities and ten co-ordinators of local youth clubs.



The project began with a questionnaire, with three active young people from each youth club completing the form. Each of these young people were aged between 16 and 22, and were active as volunteers in their local youth club. The questionnaire was developed using the European Model for Total Quality Management (a quality instrument founded by the European Foundation for Quality Management). Completing the

form took at least two to three hours per youth-club. In total, 156 questionnaires were completed. As well as being involved in the surveys, young people were invited to take part in a "coaching group" which helped to steer the project.

After completing the questionnaire, each youth club, and the three participating people, received a "plan of action". A complete description of the youth-club was developed, based on the

information obtained from the questions. This was connected to a complete evaluation of each youth club, from top to bottom.

At the same time, VFJ carried out a survey of local authorities concerning

youth club policy. Finally, VFJ made some suggestions to optimise the work of each youth club. The project was developed over three years, and at the end of this time each of the youth-clubs were questioned once again, as a form evaluation.

All of the material gathered throughout the project was compiled into a report, which describes in detail the work of



Eastern Flanders youth clubs in 2002. The report includes suggestions and recommendations for optimising youth clubs and youth club policy at the local, regional and national levels.

The project officially ended on December 19th 2002. However, the Quality Project is still continuing within the VFJ network. As well as continuing to work with the youth clubs that participated in the project, there has been considerable interest from other youth clubs, who have asked for the results, ordered the final report, or interim articles that were published during this four year period.

The project was funded by the province of Eastern Flanders. The money was used to pay the salary of one full-time staff member, and equipment such as a laptop computer and recording material. VFJ also invested its own resources into the project.

This project was innovative because it was the first time that a Quality Management approach had been used within youth work in Belgium on this scale. Because of the depth of the material gathered, they now have a very good idea of the way youth clubs in Flanders work, what methods they use, what rules and regulations are in place, and so on. But as well as surveying these things, they also offered the clubs that took part a tool to optimise their organisation and their approach to youth work.

The way the project was conducted and executed had a significant impact on the non-formal learning of the young people involved. Through this process of questioning, many youth clubs started to discuss the various topics, such as the goals they hoped to achieve. They began contacting VFJ to obtain more information. Many more young people

began to come to training courses to find out more. Through this process of questioning, they became aware of things that hadn't been discussed in some youth clubs for years.

Tom Dierckx, International Officer at VFJ, said "the project made the non-formal learning process, which is inherent to the youth club methodology, manifest. Young people started to realise that they were learning a lot through their engagement in the youth club. They began to realise how much they learn about taking responsibility, how democratic decision-making works, how to work in a group ... And because they realised it, they were motivated to improve things. It led to a kind of "trigger effect". They got a global view of what they are doing and they could look at this in an objective way, without the daily pre-occupations that a volunteer is



confronted with in the youth club. They got the global picture and saw the flaws, as well as the strengths."

By carrying out the Quality Management project, VFJ now have a very good view of how their youth clubs work. Some important conclusions have also been made, including:

- Youth clubs don't have a long term policy. Problems are mostly solved when they occur.
- They have difficulties in coping with all regulations, such as laws for non-profit organisations, taxes, permits etc.
- Motivating, training and recruiting young people (as a mean and objective of the youth club method) is a weak link. In relation to this they concluded that a significant number of clubs had weak policies (or no policy at all) on issues such as open gatherings, participation and so on.
- In those youth clubs which have a professional youth club worker (26 of 52 participating clubs) there are often poor human resources policies. This has a significant effect on the time that youth workers stay in their jobs. There is also often no clear role for the worker in the youth club.
- A lack of clear policy guidelines has led to a worsening of some functions of the youth clubs

- Youth clubs are good at fulfilling their recreational function, such as organising concerts, parties, group activities and so on

- Youth clubs appeal to young people. The method of open youth work is still a huge success with young people



The outcomes of the project have been useful for VFJ. They have used the findings to inform their work plan for the next three years, and are even considering the impact of this work for the next ten years. It has also helped inform policies on issues such as training and information, and has given VFJ and the youth clubs in East Flanders a higher degree of visibility amongst the local and regional authorities.

A follow-up to the Quality Management project is now planned in East Flanders. Using the method of peer education, they will bring youth clubs together in regional networks, in order to provide each other with support, encouragement and new ideas. The goal of this project is to make youth clubs stronger and more responsive to the needs of young people.

Appendix

ECYC Member Organisations

Albania*

Youth Consciouness Assosiation Albania
Margarita Tutulani 19/1/12, AL - Tirana
Contact person: Mr Arber Misja
Tel. no.: + 355 692 132 759
Fax no.: + 355 423 0904
E-mail: yca_al@hotmail.com

Armenia*

FYCA, Federation of Youth Clubs of
Armenia
Komitas St. 16/111, AM - 375012
Yerevan
Contact person: Mr Atom Mkhitaryan /
Ms. Zara Lavchyan
Tel. no.: + 37 4 1 27 38 04
Fax no.: + 37 4 1 52 18 59
E-mail: fyca@freenet.am

Austria

ARGE, Buro east
Goldschalgstr. 72, A - 1150 Wien
Contact person: Mr. Peter Dvorsky
Tel. no.: + 43 - 1 - 9838 966
Mobile phone: + 43 664 23 44 357
Fax no.: + 43 - 1 - 9838 967
E-mail:
jugendzentren@jugendzentrum.at

ARGE, Buro west

Kaiser Franz Joseph Strasse 29,
A - 6845 Hohenems
Contact person: Mr. Bernhard Amann
Tel. no.: + 43 - 55 76 - 798 66
Mobile phone: + 43 664 34 02 010
Fax no.: + 43 - 55 76 - 798 67
E-mail: bernard.amann@aon.at

Azerbaijan**

"BIRLIK", Caucasus Youth Centre
Ap. 42 151 B, Azadlig Ave., AZ - 370106
Baku
Contact person: Ms. Elyura Mammadova
Tel. no.: + 99450 3295309 / + 99450
3499365
Fax no.: + 99412 410132 / 42
E-mail: birlik@mail.az /
elyura_m@hotmail.com

Belgium

VFJ, Vlaamse Federatie van Jeugdhizen
& Jongerencentra
Ommeganckstraat 85, B - 2018
Antwerpen
Contact person: Mr. Tom Dierckx
Tel. no.: + 32 - 32 - 26 40 83
Fax no.: + 32 - 32 - 26 40 85
E-mail: info@vfj.be
Homepage: www.vfj.be

Bulgaria **

BASH, Bulgarian Association for School Health
P.O. Box 66, BL - 1606 Sofia
Contact person: Mr. Methody Methodieff
Tel. no/ fax.: + 359 88 - 937-236
Mobile phone: + 359 88 - 937-236
E-mail: BASH@netbg.com

Cyprus

PCCYC
Iroon Square 1
Agios Mamas Refugees Settlement
2330 LaKatamia, CY - Nicosia
Contact person: Mr. Panikos Giorgallis
Tel. no.: + 357 - 2 - 2323260
Mobile phone: + 357 - 9968998
Fax no.: + 357 - 2 - 531 2342
E-mail: panikosg@hotmail.com

The Czech Republic**

SMK, Svaz Klubu Mladeze
Jac van Ham
Senovázne Nam. 24,
CR - 116 47 Praha 1

Contact person: Mr. Miloslav Huttr.
Tel. no.: + 420 - 2 - 2256 89
Fax no.: + 420 - 2 - 8590 272
E-mail: info@gvh.cz

Denmark

UR, Ungdomsringen
Tigergarden, Norregade 77,6 - 5100
Odense C
Contact person: Ms. Nanna Muusmann
Tel. no.: + 45 - 65 - 47 21 69
Fax no.: + 45 - 70 - 27 00 54
E-mail: nan@ungdomsringen.dk
Homepage: www.ungdomsringen.dk

Estonia*

EANK, Eesti Avatud Noortekeskuste
Uhendus
Contact Person: Ms. Marion Bobkov,
Ms.Tiiu Rahuoja
Tähe 101, Tartu, 50107, Estonia
Tel. No. +37 – 27 -361 699
E-mail: eank@hotmail.ee
Homepage: www.ank.ee

Finland

SETNL, Settlementinuorten Liitto ry.
Finnish Federation of Settlement Youth
Associations
Sturenkatu 11, SF - 00510 Helsinki
Contact person: Ms. Paivi Railotie
Tel. no.: + 358 - 9 - 7701 2201
Fax no.: + 358 - 9 - 7701 2101
E-mail: paivi.railotie@settlementtinooret.fi

France

FFMJC, Fédération Française des MJC
15, rue la Condamine, F - 75017 Paris
Contact person: Ms. Rebecca Jourdain
Tel. no.: + 33 - 1 - 44 69 82 25
Fax no.: + 33 - 1 - 44 69 82 30
E-mail: rebecca.jourdain@ffmjc.org

Germany**

JuNet e.V.
August Baudert Platz 1, D - 99432
Weimar
Contact person: Mr. Raimond Hoeft
Tel. no.: + 49 - 3643 519380
Fax no.: + 49 - 3643 519379
E-mail: info@jugendnetzwerk.com
Homepage: www.junet.de

Great Britain

UK Youth
2nd Floor, Kirby House, 20/24 Kirby
Street,
GB - EC1N 8TS London
Contact person: Ms. Pauline Taylor
Tel. no.: + 44 - 207 - 242 4045
Fax no.: + 44 - 207 - 242 4125
E-mail: info@ukyouth.org
Homepage: www.ukyouth.org

Iceland

SAMFES, Youth Club Organization of
Iceland
c/o Hitt Husid, Pósthússtræti 3-5,

IS - 101 Reykjavik

Contact person: Mr. Jón Rúnar
Hilmarrsson
Tel. no.: + 354 - 897 5254
Fax no.: + 354 - 590 2501
E-mail: samfes@samfes.is
Homepage: www.samfes.is

Ireland

NYF, National Youth Federation
20 Lower Dominic Street, IRL - Dublin 1
Contact person: Mr. Ken Keogh
Tel. no.: + 353 - 1 - 87 29 933
Fax no.: + 353 - 1 - 87 24 183
E-mail: kkeogh@nyf.ie
Homepage: www.nyf.ie

Italy **

ARCI, Nuova Associazione
Via Giacchero 22/2, I - 17100 Savona
Contact person: Mr. David Pesce
Tel. no.: + 39 19 804433
Fax no.: + 39 19 82 57 44
E-mail: arcisavona@geocities.com /
pesce@arci.it

Luxembourg *

Daachverband vun de Letzebuenger
Jugendklub
157, rue de Dippach, L - 8055 Bertrange
Contact person: Mr. Marc Rauchs
Fax no.: + 352 31 23 32
E-mail: marc.rauchs@consultant.lu

Norway

Landsforeningen Ungdom & Fritid
Grønland 10, N - 0188 Oslo
Contact person: Ms. Sylvi Jørgensen
Tel. no.: + 47 - 22 - 17 95 99
Fax no.: + 47 - 22 - 17 95 96
E-mail: landsforeningen@ungogfri.no
Homepage: www.ungogfri.no

Romania*

FONGTR
14 Papiu Ilarian St., 2400, Sibiu,
Romania
Contact Person: Elena Lotrean
Tel. no.: + 40 - 745 - 516 586
Fax no.: + 40 - 269 - 229 627
Email: fongtr2000@yahoo.com,
elenalotrean@rdslink.ro

Russia

Russian Union of Youth
Maroseika 3/13, RU - 101990 Moscow
Contact person: Ms. Dina Kisselewa
Tel. No.: + 7 - 095 - 206 - 8032
Fax no.: + 7 - 095 - 206 - 8612
E-mail: ruy@cityline.ru
Homepage: www.ruy.ru

Spain **

Ajuntament de Barcelona
Casal d'Associacions Juvenils
C/ Ausiàs Marc, 60, E - 08010 Barcelona
Contact person. Ms: Anna Morero
Tel.: + 34 901 51 52 53
Fax: + 34 93 265 51 58
E-mail: internacional@casalbcn.info

Sweden

Fritidsforum
Box 21005, S - 10031 Stockholm
Contact person: Mr. Swante Holm /
Ms. MajLis Blomqvist
Tel. no.: + 46 - 8 - 16 07 25
Fax no.: + 46 - 8 - 32 36 83
E-mail: kansliet@fritidsforum.se
Homepage: www.fritidsforum.se

Ukraine *

Our Children
Chernyahovskogo St. 13, UKR - 65009
Odessa
Contact person: Mr. Vadim Georgienko /
Ms. Inna Pashko
Tel./Fax no.: + 380 - 482 639583
E-mail: unclub@paco.net
Homepage: www.ourchildren.com.ua/eng

ECYC Secretariat

Tigergarden, Norregade 77,6 - 5100
Odense C

Contact person: Ms. Nanna Muusmann

Tel. no.: + 45 - 65 - 47 21 69

Fax no.: + 45 - 70 - 27 00 54

E-mail: nan@ungdomsringen.dk

Homepage: www.ecyc.org

ECYC Secretary General

2nd Floor, Kirby House, 20/24 Kirby
Street,

GB - EC1N 8TS London

Contact person: Andrew Cummings

Tel. no.: + 44 - 207 - 242 4045

Fax no.: + 44 - 207 - 242 4125

E-mail: andrewc@ukyouth.org

* Observer Members of ECYC

** Associate Members of ECYC

***Networking partners of ECYC



Innovations