



mini-Compendium on non-formal education

Directorate of Youth and Sport
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This mini-compendium is a collection of articles and publications produced by the Directorate of Youth of the Council of Europe and its Partnership programme with the European Commission

It was specially designed as an addendum to the European Portfolio for youth workers and youth leaders working in the context of non-formal education/learning

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Table of contents

Background documents	4
Council of Europe publications	4
Publications of the Partnership of the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the area of youth	5
Study on the links between formal and non-formal education	6
DOmino	8
COMPASS: A manual on human rights education with young people	9
Pathways towards validation and recognition of education, training and learning in the youth field	10
Curriculum And Quality Development Group.....	12
Giving Credit: Certification and Assessment of Non-formal Education by C. Vink.....	12
Resistance in Non-formal Education by Mette Bram	15
The European Commission’s White Paper Coyote theme	17
The impact of lifelong learning on non-formal learning in youth by H.-J. Schild.....	18
Non-formal Experiment? by Conchi Gallego	18
Valuing non-formal education by Alicja Szpot	20
The impact of the White Paper on Youth on non-formal education by R. McCabe & H. Södermann	21
Wide angle: Quality of Training: Myth or Mystery? by Andreas Karsten	24
Milestones for formal and social recognition of non-formal and informal learning in youth work - by H.-J. Schild	25
European information,young people and non-formal learning by B. Payne & R.-E. Voinea	26
A step towards the recognition of Non-formal education in Serbia and Montenegro By D. Markovic	28
Reforming the concept of education through the recognition of Non-Formal Education.The position of the European Youth Forum by P.T. Madsen.....	30
The European strategy on recognition of non-formal learning in the Youth Programme by R. Bergstein.....	32
Bring more peace into non-formal education. Peace and violence in non-learning groups by S. Strenner	33
T-Kit N°4: Intercultural Learning	35
T-Kit N°6: Training Essentials	35
T-Kit N°8: Social Inclusion	37

Background documents

that were significant in leading up to the European Portfolio for youth workers and youth leaders working in the context of non-formal education/learning:

Non-formal education: report - **Committee on Culture and Education** / Dumitrescu, Cristian (rapp.).- Strasbourg : Council of Europe, 1999.- 12 p.
<http://assembly.coe.int>

Non-formal education - **Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1437 (2000) 24 January 2000** -
<http://assembly.coe.int>

Report of the Symposium on non-formal education (Strasbourg, 13-15 October 2000) / Council of Europe. Directorate of Youth and Sport.- 89 p.
e-archives of the Council of Europe: www.coe.int

Non-formal education - Recommendation 1437 (2000): reply from the Committee of Ministers / Council of Europe. Parliamentary Assembly.- Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2001.- 5 p. -
<http://assembly.coe.int>

Recommendation Rec(2003)8 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning of young people. (*Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 30 April 2003 at the 838th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies*) - www.coe.int

Study on the links between formal and non-formal education, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Strasbourg, March 2003 - du Bois-Reymond, M. - www.coe.int/youth

Pathways towards validation and recognition of education, training and learning in the youth field
Working paper by the Youth Unit of the Directorate 'Youth, Civil Society, Communication' in the Directorate General 'Education and Culture' of the European Commission and the Youth Department of the Directorate 'Youth and Sport' in the Directorate General 'Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport' of the Council of Europe. Strasbourg and Brussels, February 2004
<http://www.training-youth.net>

Curriculum And Quality Development Group (2001)

An Experts' Committee within the Partnership Agreement between the European Commission and the Council of Europe on European level youth leader training
<http://www.training-youth.net>

Council of Europe publications

The Council of Europe and Youth - Thirty years of experience. Eberhard, L. Council of Europe publishing, October 2002. ISBN 92-871-4976-3.

Compass - A manual on human rights education with young people - Brander, P. et al. Council of Europe, 2002. ISBN: 92-871-4880-5. Available in more than 20 languages. www.coe.int/compass

DOmino - A manual to use peer group education as a means to fight racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance, 3rd edition, revised, 2004
www.coe.int/compass

Education pack - Ideas, resources, methods and activities for informal intercultural education with young people and adults, second edition, 2004 (revised and updated) ISBN 92-871-5629-8
www.coe.int/compass

Publications of the Partnership of the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the area of youth

Trading up - Potential and performance in non-formal learning. Chisholm, L. Hoskins, B. with Glahn, C. editors. Council of Europe publishing, August 2005. ISBN 92-871-5765-0

The training kits “T-kits” are thematic publications written by experienced youth trainers. They are easy-to-use handbooks for use in training and study sessions. The T-Kit series is the result of a collective effort involving people from different cultural, professional and organisational backgrounds. Youth trainers, youth leaders in NGOs and professional writers have worked together in order to create high quality publications, which would address the needs of the target group while recognising the diversity of approaches across Europe to each subject. T-Kits are produced in English, French & German. (other translations are available on line at www.training-youth.net)

Coyote: a magazine dealing with issues around “youth - training - europe”. It is addressed to trainers, youth workers and all those who want to know more about the world of youth worker training in Europe. Coyote wants to provide a forum to share and give new insights into some of the issues that trainers face in their work, issues related to the diverse training concepts, methodologies, practices and realities across this continent. It also informs about current developments in this field, especially at European level.

<http://www.training-youth.net>.

Study on the links between formal and non-formal education

www.coe.int/youth

[...] The meaning of non-formal education in relation to formal education

For the first time in European educational history, non-formal education steps out of the shadow of marginal relevance for the future of the young generation and into the bright light of the centrality of learning as the most important activity of human beings at present. The application of non-formal education to a much broader public than adults alone, who in the past used non-formal education mainly to compensate for missed educational chances, must not be misunderstood as only one of so many well-intentioned measures in the field of youth welfare and youth policy, but must be understood as part of a development which changes the concept of learning as a human activity, and education as the societal organisation of it altogether. These changes are irreversible and must therefore be analysed with scrutiny to prepare a sound educational policy for the future.

[...] Demographic and social changes make the relations between the generations more complex: ageing societies make youth a scarce good and urge a new societal contract between the younger and the older generations. While the young have little political power at present, they have most of the learning power for the future. Therefore the definition of what learning should imply, what it takes to make it a worthwhile enterprise, no longer lies exclusively with the older generation but is partly taken over by the young learners. This is a fundamentally new given in education. The older generation is still reluctant to give away power over the definition of the content and organisation of learning. But education and learning will have to become a shared project between the generations in knowledge-based societies.

The prolongation of the stage of youth is due to prolonged educational trajectories. The nature of learning changes in accordance with it. When learning took only a couple of years in the lives of the young, it was possible to define it in terms of fixed curricula and didactic models. Only a small percentage of the young generation was allowed to learn beyond

compulsory education. With the coming of mass education from the 1960s and 1970s onwards, learning tended to become a self-adopted activity of individuals and to lose its coercive character. This tendency of autonomous learning first becomes visible outside formal education, in non-formal education. Non-formal education fills the gaps which formal education does not fill by giving the learner a say in what s/he learns. Young learners begin massively to resist coercive learning modes and look for learning opportunities outside compulsory education. School is needed for credits and diplomas, but school does not succeed to motivate all learners to learn all that they can and want to learn.

The multicultural composition of (post-) modern societies demands the adaptation of formal education to suit the needs not only of the traditionally underprivileged learners, but also of the 'newcomers' from ethnic-cultural minorities as well. One of the main tasks of formal education was and still is to prevent social exclusion. That is to say, to prepare the young for an independent life, socially as well as economically. Inasmuch as the educational system and the labour market grow apart from each other, the school loses its monopoly on teaching and learning. Non-formal education is one of the forces that question that monopoly by providing alternative learning opportunities and learning sites.

Because of its centrality, learning in all its forms has become of high political relevance and is therefore subject to continuous political struggle and negotiation. Never before was education such an issue in public debate, was it so extensively researched, were so many experiments going on, and were so many people involved in the business of education and learning. The 'politicising' of education involves also the learners. They participate in the debate in many ways, passively as well as actively. They react to the over-formalisation of learning in school by repeating classes, dropping out of school, underachieving, rejecting becoming school teachers and trying to make their own educational choices. While it is true that young people do not care much

about political matters, they are highly involved in educational politics on their own terms. It seems that non-formal education offers more chances to make that involvement productive than does formal education, by assuring young people that they are 'full' citizens and participants.

The development towards a unified Europe - not only of the EU but also in the near future including ten more countries - affects the younger generations more deeply than those of the older generation, simply because they will be living longer in such a united Europe. They must endure and handle the contradictions inherent in European unification and in worldwide globalisation. To be able to do that they need new capacities which stretch from ICT knowledge to frustration tolerance and from political awareness to intercultural learning. They must learn to handle risks and to make intelligent use of available as well as not yet exploited resources. In short, they must develop transversal skills. For all this they need the support and solidarity of the older generation. Schools will have to change in order to incorporate these developments and to convey these new capacities. To accomplish this, formal education must get rid of rigid organisational structures and vested interests of professionals.

While there is little doubt about the definition of formal education, non-formal education is a much broader and thus less clearly defined concept. Furthermore, the definition of non-formal education may vary from country to country. In many countries, it is understood that formal education takes place in schools, training institutions and at colleges and universities. Also, it has clearly-defined curricula and rules for certification. Non-formal education on the other hand takes place mostly outside formal educational systems and is voluntary. It covers a wide variety of learning fields, like youth work, youth clubs, sport associations, voluntary service, training and many other activities that organize learning experiences. It has less clearly framed curricula and much less 'certification power' that gives it a weaker social and financial position. Also its degree of professionalisation is lower and less strictly defined in comparison with formal education. Formal education is compulsory for the majority of students and must rely on extrinsic learning motivation; non-formal

education has the advantage of being voluntary and can in principle count on the intrinsic motivation of its participants. In some countries, it is even seen as a learning process with no overt syllabus, no teacher and no examination or test at all.

A multitude of reforms are going on in formal education to incorporate elements of non-formal education, such as individualized curricular approaches, student participation bodies, self-regulated learning, allowing students to choose subjects according to their inclination as well as including ICT as a learning strategy. Also, in many European countries, school reforms include an enlargement of the autonomy of the school. Such reforms testify to the awareness of formal education of the need to adapt to societal changes. The question remains however if it is able solve the paradox of coercive learning on the one hand and intrinsic motivation on the other hand; in knowledge-based societies intrinsic motivation is an absolute necessity because the learner must acquire a learning habitus which motivates her or him for lifelong learning.

Formal education cannot guarantee a lifelong and well-paid job as it could in the past, although there is still in most European countries - albeit not in all- a strong correlation between educational level and chances of finding employment. The 'normal work biography' is not a self-evident result of school learning anymore. That weakens formal education. There are many young people especially in lower educational tracks who want 'to do something' and by that they do not mean learning at school. They feel that what they learn in school will not necessarily - or not at all - help them find work, so why bother?

A rise of private schools and universities can be observed which serve the needs and wishes of privileged students (and their parents), while state education remains indispensable for the majority of the less-privileged. The potentially widening gap between private schools and institutions for well-to-do students and state-financed schools for the rest forms a threat to formal as well as non-formal education. The 'community school' combines formal education with neighbourhood-based non-formal activities not so much for the privileged as for underprivileged students.

Finally: The question about the relationship between formal and non-formal education is highly dependent on national context. Traditions in the field of non-formal education are strong in the Scandinavian countries and Germany, but are weak in Southern Europe and were absent in communist countries except for state youth organisations. So there is no one single answer and analysis to the problem, but each country must research the question in accordance with its own traditions and needs. [...]

European Portfolio for youth workers and youth leaders working in the context of non-formal education/learning

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 education/ learning, youth work and associative life, and has elaborated criteria and quality standards for youth work and youth policy.

Non-formal education / learning is by definition voluntary and intentional, and covers a wide variety of learning fields: youth work, youth clubs, sport associations, voluntary service, and many other activities, which organize learning experiences. In addition to taking place “outside school”, non-formal education/ learning also involves “another way of learning” and concerns mainly objectives related to the integration and active participation of learners in society in all respects. The objectives, as well as the methodologies of non-formal education/ learning, take into account the overall development of the individual and, to a large extent, the personal experience of the learner. Therefore, non-formal education/ learning provides an appropriate framework for responding to individual aspirations and needs and for developing creative and social skills. For the Council of Europe, it is also important to stress that the concept of non-formal education/ learning involves, as an integral part of the development of knowledge and skills, a whole range of social and ethical values as referred to above. These are in particular human rights, tolerance, the promotion of peace, solidarity and social justice, inter-generational dialogue, gender equality, democratic citizenship and intercultural learning. [...]

DOmino

www.coe.int/compass

[...] Educational approaches both within and outside schools are tremendously important. How we refer to these approaches depends a lot on context. And it is also “true” that one can find more formal methods in out-of-school education, (a lecture, an input, written exercises...) just as more informal methods can also be found in schools, (working in project groups, using the local environment...). When DOmino was written in 1994-95, we were used to differentiate between formal and informal

education - it was relatively rare to talk of “non-formal education/learning”. The debate has moved on, to the extent that the European Youth Forum recently issued a policy paper called “Youth organisations as non-formal educators - recognising our role” (November 2003). Informal education is now more often referred to when talking about non-planned learning situations: in the family, on a bus, talking with friends. [...]

COMPASS: A manual on human rights education with young people

www.coe.int/compass

[...] Formal and non-formal educational settings
The most appropriate way of involving participants and structuring an educational process depends to a large extent upon the setting in which an educator is working. You may have more or less freedom regarding content, timing and form of activity depending on whether you are operating within a formal, informal or non-formal educational context. The activities presented in this manual have been designed to be flexible enough for use in all such contexts: within youth clubs, schools, summer camps, informal meetings, and so on.

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.

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.

[...] Intercultural Education

There is a natural connection between global education and intercultural education, which looks at the way we interact with other cultures, societies and social groupings. All societies today are characterised by increasing levels of multiculturalism and cultural diversity and this makes acknowledgement of, and respect for, the rights of minorities increasingly important. We are being forced to reassess old conceptions of national societies as culturally homogeneous entities: the dual processes of European integration, together with increased economic and social interdependence between different world regions have made such notions outdated. Even in those parts of the globe which are not experiencing patterns of immigration, existing conflicts can more often than not be traced back to a lack of understanding between different peoples or ways of life to be found in one common society. [...]

Intercultural education is also an effective way of addressing the modern phenomena of racism and racial discrimination and intolerance.

All different, but not indifferent!

The Directorate of Youth and Sport, especially through the European Youth Centres and Foundation, has devoted much effort to the field of intercultural education. The 'All Different All Equal' campaign against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance was set up to address the growth of racist hostility and intolerance towards minority groups. The Campaign itself sought to "bring people together and give extra momentum to the struggle against all forms of intolerance."

The objectives and principles of intercultural education have also been pursued in a variety of ways through intercultural learning - a term that is more commonly used in non-formal education, particularly in European youth work.

Pathways towards validation and recognition of education, training and learning in the youth field

[...] The need for a better validation of non-formal learning

4. All initiatives in education and training underline the increasing role of lifelong and lifewide learning. They emphasize that learning must encompass the whole spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning for promoting personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability. As a consequence they plead for a better validation of non-formal and informal learning and they state particularly a need for a better social and formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning [...]

5. In the final Declaration of the 5th Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth within the Council of Europe in 1998 the ministers encouraged the Member States to promote equal opportunities by recognising training and skills acquired by young people through non-formal education/learning, and by identifying various ways to certify experiences and qualifications acquired in this framework. Furthermore, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in 2000, encouraged in a Recommendation on non-formal education⁹ all those who shape educational policies "to acknowledge that non-formal education is an essential part of the educational process..." and "calling on governments and the appropriate authorities of Member States to recognise non-formal education as a de facto partner in the lifelong learning process and in youth policy...".

6. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted in 2003 a Recommendation on the promotion and the recognition of non-formal education/learning of young people. It recommends that the governments of Member States "reaffirm that non-formal education/learning constitutes a fundamental dimension of the lifelong learning process, and therefore work towards the development of effective standards of recognition of non-formal education/ learning...".

7. The European Youth Forum in its policy paper on "Youth organisations as non-formal

educators - recognising our role"¹⁰ of November 2003 stresses that "one of the most important challenges that education policy makers will have to face in the coming years will be to find ways to increase recognition of the value of non-formal education among young people". It further states that time has come for youth organisations to actively engage in the process of recognition.

Learning in youth activities

8. The complementary character of formal, non-formal and informal learning is more and more undisputed. The necessary skills that people need today to enable them to become informed, active and responsible citizens can be acquired through learning in all settings and contexts. What we learn in formal settings (schools, colleges, training sites) is only one part of needed skills; learning through civil society as well as leisure time activities or in social environments, i.e. in non-formal settings (associations, clubs, youth activities, political and family life etc) is the other complementary side.

9. Especially young people take part in a wide range of activities outside mainstream education and training systems, in youth work and youth clubs, in sports and neighbourhood associations, in voluntary and civil society activities and in international exchange and mobility programmes. Non-formal learning is often seen by its participants as the most positive, efficient and attractive counterpart to a largely inefficient and unattractive system of formal education and training.

At European level the YOUTH programme¹¹ with its diverse actions is a good example of this work and a good practice as such. Hence, the youth sector has over the last years gained experience in providing a large variety of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

10. Having in mind the definition of formal, non-formal and informal learning, agreed on in the lifelong learning strategy, all kinds of learning are relevant in the youth context, but

this is specifically true for non-formal and informal learning:

Formal learning: in specific cases the youth sector / youth work acts as a substitute, alternative education and training provider (e.g. in second chance schools and similar projects), mainly for school dropouts, early school leavers, disaffected young people or other young people at risk. The learning process is structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time, learning support and it is intentional; the participants get certificates and/or diplomas.

Non-formal learning: learning outside institutional contexts (out-of-school) is the key activity, but also key competence of the youth field. Non-formal learning in youth activities is structured, based on learning objectives, learning time and specific learning support and it is intentional. For that reason one could also speak of non-formal education. It typically does not lead to certification, but in an increasing number of cases, certificates are delivered.

Informal learning: learning in daily life activities, in work, family, leisure is mainly learning by doing; it is typically not structured and not intentional and does not lead to certification. In the youth sector informal learning takes place in youth and leisure initiatives, in peer group and voluntary activities etc. It provides specific learning opportunities, in particular of social, cultural and personal "soft" skills.

11. Principles in the field of non-formal and informal learning in youth activities are manifold:

- the voluntary and often self-organised character of learning, the intrinsic motivation of participants,
- the close link to young people's aspirations and interests, the participative and learner-centred approach,
- the open character and structure, the transparency and flexibility of the underlying curricular construction,
- the evaluation of success and failure in a collective process and without judgement on individual success or failure, the 'right to make mistakes',
- a supportive learning environment, - a

preparation and staging of activities with a professional attitude, regardless of whether the activity is run by professional or voluntary youth workers and trainers,

- the sharing of results with the interested public and a planned follow-up.

[...]

Need for social recognition of learning in the youth field...

14. The youth sector plays a crucial role in the political processes related to lifelong learning and education and training. The youth sector also contributes to the implementation of the key priorities and actions in the field. The youth field must however take a more prominent place in the strategies for achieving the Lisbon goals, in particular in the field of non-formal and informal learning and its validation and recognition.

15. Despite all visibility and undisputed success rates, the youth work record in education, training and learning is easily overlooked or simply made a subcategory within education by decision-makers and stakeholders in established fields such as education and vocational education and training. But, youth work is more than a sub-category of education and training. It has to be seen for its own sake, but also for civil society purposes. Hence, the youth sector has to constantly reemploy strategies for recognition in tune with social changes and new overall educational objectives such as the preparation of young people for a knowledge based economy, for lifelong learning and for the civil society.

16. Non-formal learning as a whole, but particularly in youth activities, is typically undervalued as not being 'real' learning. There is a lack of understanding of the benefits of non-formal learning and 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, NGO's, education experts, etc.) and of young people themselves in order to promote non-formal education as an integral part of learning and to enhance its social recognition.

Curriculum And Quality Development Group

<http://www.training-youth.net>

[...] Non-formal education

In the understanding of the Group non formal education has become the summary notion for what, in the past, was referred to as out of school education. It is based on the intrinsic motivation of the learner and, generally does not judge or document individual learning achievement. As a learning system, it is common practice in community work, youth and social work, voluntary service, NGO activity at local, regional, national and European levels.

It is also a common feature in training in companies and non-profit organisations. Non-formal education is learner centred. To label it non formal learning has no added value given the participative character of the learning/education process intrinsic to it. Non-formal education is non-hierarchical in nature. It has highly differentiated formats in terms of time, location, numbers and composition of participants and training teams, the dimensions of learning and the application of its results. Its effectiveness can be assessed and evaluated by both educational and social research with the same degree of reliability as formal education.

Non-formal education is the dominant learning feature in the youth field of the Council of Europe and the youth related programmes of the European Commission. In these programmes, there is a unique concentration on a variety of elements:

- intercultural learning;
- leadership and organisational

management within European and other international settings;

- training for the effective implementation of European youth projects;
- advocacy for youth issues and concerns;
- community and Citizenship experience with a European dimension;
- NGO and civil society development;
- participation of young people in discussions of their own concern;
- minorities, social exclusion and the fight against racism, xenophobia and intolerance.

Non-formal education is often confused with informal education, which is somewhat unavoidable, because the concepts overlap. In informal learning what happens is an individual experience enriching personal development that takes place throughout all walks of life and in peer relations, within the family, through the media and other factors of influence in the lives of young people. However, there is no curricular responsibility. No institutionalised body stands behind the learning that takes place about values, content, good practice or social qualification. There are no learning standards, there is no structure and no evaluation.

Non-formal education provides all these elements. The choice to participate is free and voluntary. [...]

Giving Credit: Certification and Assessment of Non-formal Education ***by C. Vink***

in Coyote No1, December 1999

Certificates, portfolios... Should young people get official recognition for youth work? What is the goal of non-formal education?

[...] Credits for European youth work

European youth work is part of the so-called domain of non-formal education.

Non-formal education is often defined as being all those activities that young people are involved in after 'school'. These activities take place in various settings: youth clubs, youth organisations and movements, youth centres, community centres, sport clubs etc. What these places have in common is that volunteers, youth

leaders or youth workers offer some type of professional guidance. One of the most important aims of these educators is to stimulate young people to participate in their own environment and to teach them how to take responsibility for their own situation. The key words are active participation and social development. Youth work is often defined in the context of, and in comparison to, the formal education system. The formal education system is mostly fact-oriented and focused on cognitive learning and acquiring knowledge. This knowledge and these facts can then be reviewed in tests and exams. Non-formal education on the other hand is process-oriented and based on learning life skills which are more difficult to assess. Learning takes place through experience and through reflections on this experience.

Although both formal and non-formal forms of education prepare young people for the challenges and responsibilities that they will face in adult life, there is growing concern over whether the conventional classroom approach is successful in doing so. Our society is changing very rapidly and is becoming more complex. People have to be much more mobile - occupationally, socially and geographically - than in the past. This requires enormous flexibility and social skills. The formal education system often fails in preparing young people for this challenge. [...] Traditional knowledge and skills are no longer sufficient tools. The question is, does non-formal education create alternative opportunities?

Out-of-school based programmes enable young people to be involved in social learning. They acquire 'life' skills and competencies through organising activities, raising funds, solving problems or volunteering in their community. These skills and competencies are essential for their future and should be recognised as such. Social competence is a prerequisite for social participation. This view is also promoted by European institutions like the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the European Youth Forum. [...] There are already a number of initiatives which are looking at forms of accreditation for non-formal education.

The strength of non-formal education is that there is a high level of participation by young people themselves. It is easier to be involved in activities in which you can have some responsibility and sense of ownership. As shown by the quote from the young person involved in the youth exchange, it is also highly motivating to have some concrete results - tangible learning. This raises the important element of commitment or 'engagement'. There is not the same pressure to learn as there is in school for example. This type of active learning is also less exclusive than the formal education system. Success or failure in school mostly depends on the cognitive and intellectual capacities of a young person. You can fail or pass the exam. These are not the same criteria as in non-formal learning. In principle, everyone is encouraged to participate and the activities are based on the needs and possibilities of those involved.

What then are the skills and competencies which can be learnt through non-formal education? A striking aspect of non-formal education is that the working methods and approaches are often better researched and described than are the learning elements and outcomes. The methods are active, intercultural or experiential and participant-oriented, learning by doing. The learning elements can be summarised as life skills and competencies. Examples are problem solving abilities, communication skills, flexibility, self-awareness & self-esteem, personal discipline, relationship management, self-management skills, commitment, leadership and negotiation skills. What these have in common is that they can not be learnt through a textbook, they have to be experienced and practised 'in life'.

...in the world around us qualities are becoming as important as qualifications...

Systems of assessment and certification

At this moment there are several examples of award and certification schemes for out-of-school based programmes. Most organisations give young people some proof that they have participated in an activity or training programme. Some take this a step further by describing the activities in which

the young person has been involved. For instance, the volunteers that have fulfilled two-thirds of their European Voluntary Service receive a certificate describing their activities and role in the project. These are examples of internal accreditation. The type and content of the certificate or award is developed by the organisations themselves.

In some countries models have been developed that are well-established and widely recognised, for example the 'Youth Award Scheme' developed by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) in the UK. This award is used by more than 1800 educational establishments in the UK as a way of developing personal qualities and skills. The award is not based on factual knowledge but organised around key skills. The participants are highly involved in their own learning through:

- 1 The assessment of their own learning
- 2 The setting of clear and achievable goals
- 3 Identifying, expressing and reflecting on their own view of progress and the development of new opportunities
- 4 Summarising achievements and compiling a portfolio of supporting evidence

Another example - also based in the UK - comes from the programmes of the Prince's Trust. This organisation offers a programme for young people with the aims of developing particular skills and qualities, broadening social experience and awareness and building the confidence and self-esteem of participants. Participants receive certificates for their involvement. These assess the development of core skills, self-awareness, progress towards identified goals and different kinds of achievement.

What these two examples have in common is that they are already rather formalised. They are systems of external accreditation that use standardised criteria to assess the learning of young people. The criteria are the same for every organisation that wants to take part in the scheme. These schemes

are widely accepted and recognised in the UK, even by employers. This raises the question whether such a system is a desired format for all youth work, especially European youth work. It does not leave much room for flexibility because it means that you have to keep records of every activity. Although assessment is clearly not a formal exam, it might be beyond the abilities of certain young people and in fact may contradict other objectives of the programme.

A more useful and workable approach for the assessment of European youth work may be a system of portfolio building. A portfolio is normally used by photographers to show a collection of their work. It could also be a useful model for documenting the skills and competencies that a young person acquires in out-of-school based activities. The young person is the owner of their own portfolio and it documents the different types of activities in which they have been involved. The portfolio could consist of direct and indirect evidence of their activities, such as a collection of reports, assessments written by project leaders or other materials. The use of a 'dossier' or portfolio which summarises the different types of projects and activities carried out by the young person would also help to bring together the wide array of awards and certification models that now exist. The idea is that the portfolio is not brought along during job interviews. 'Owners' uses it to assess themselves and to become more confident about their qualities and skills. A feeling of achievement can be underlined with the evidence brought from real experience.

The challenges of certification and assessment

The pitfall in the discussion of accreditation for non-formal learning is that too much focus may be put on the 'certificates'. This often entails a system of standardised criteria. This is, for example, a development that we can see in vocational training where such systems are becoming common practice. In vocational training, questions about objectives are easier to address, it is about learning a trade through practise. But what then are the objectives of out-of-school based programmes? The

dilemma for non-formal education is that, on the one hand we would like the learning elements and competencies to be recognised and valued but, on the other hand, we don't want to discourage young people from being involved due to the standards becoming too formalised. The motivation for young people to become active in youth and voluntary work or community-based activities is generally not based on enlarging their career opportunities. They do it because it is a fun way to spend their free time, it is interesting and it allows them to participate and become involved. Too much focus on accreditation could easily have the opposite effect to what we would like to achieve.

The challenge for European youth work, in general, and the institutions involved, in particular, is to look very critically at the strengths of non-formal education and what alternative systems can be developed for

the assessment of learning outcomes. It implies that tools of assessment have to be developed which are not specifically related to the content of our programmes but are more focused on the personal development of young people. Also, it will only work if the young people themselves are involved in their assessment. They should be encouraged to reflect, describe, analyse and communicate what they experience in the activities in which they participate. In this respect, it would be interesting to take up the challenge of developing a common 'shell' or portfolio of European youth work activities. This would allow us to better research the value and learning outcomes of non-formal education and to look critically at the ways in which we conduct our programmes. If in the process the voice of young people (on what they would like in terms of certification and recognition for their involvement) is included, European youth work will get the credit it deserves.

Resistance in Non-formal Education by Mette Bram

in Coyote No3, December 2000

In her article, Mette Bram gives some explanations of the psychological mechanisms, which might provoke such resistance and some tips for trainers on how to react in those situations.

In working with some political and/or students' organisations I have frequently experienced resistance amongst participants against dealing with more personal issues at seminars.

I think this is a general phenomenon that most of us experience to a certain extent.

During study sessions and training courses as trainers we often try to facilitate personal, individual awareness about issues such as roles, identity and feelings, no matter whether the title of the course is "Generation Gaps", "Intercultural Learning" or "Organisational Management". This focus on a more personal (both inner and social) development is one key factor which makes non-formal education radically different from formal education.

This article attempts to give some explanations of the psychological mechanisms involved when participants meet us with either passivity, irony or a very critical attitude (inspired by the work of P. Berliner). Typical reactions of participants can be:

- 1 To focus on intellectual arguments and generalised, abstract discussions including a distinct lack of personal statements.
- 2 To criticise the structure and time frame of the seminar or exercise, including delayed and indirect criticism taking place during breaks (out of the relevant context, away from the relevant trainers etc.).
- 3 To try to escape from the learning environment, either by constantly requesting breaks or another frame for the activity ("why can't we be more outside, the sun is shining"), or starting to talk while the trainer or other participants are presenting their points.

I see many of these reactions as resistance mechanisms characterised by an unwillingness to deal with potential psychological conflicts concerning personal self-confrontation and relations to others.

Most of the participants from, for instance, political and/or students organisations are what we can characterise as verbally or logically intelligent (see the work of Howard Gardner/Daniel Goleman), and most of them are taking the first steps on the career ladder in higher education. They are used to a certain pupil role and are typically rewarded for the "good arguments".

In non-formal education [...] people are developing their emotional intelligence that so often is totally neglected in formal education.

Many participants will automatically resist getting in touch with these feelings. So first of all, to my mind, a lot of resistance is merely a natural defence mechanism. It is an unconscious protection of the person against involving personal emotions and life experience in the learning process. The root of this type of resistance is fear of change, which is related to the break-down of the traditional pupil role (which typically takes place at seminars) and to fear of changing previous beliefs and identity, and fear of being manipulated. These fears are usually unconscious for the participants and the shield against them is resistance against getting involved in certain activities.

Resistance among participants, whether it appears as passivity or maybe anger can start a vicious circle. For instance, some participants might express their dissatisfaction by stating that "there is not enough time for the discussion" and "we are wasting our time in the "family/tree/focus groups" (the moments set aside during seminars for process evaluation in smaller groups that typically demands personal statements). The trainer(s) might then start to argue that "we have a time schedule we have to stick to", and this then results in a process where the participants will not thoroughly engage themselves in the assignments as an indirect form of protest. This might end with group inputs in plenary sessions that are of low quality or simply make fun of the subject matter. The trainers can then complain among themselves that the participants are "a bad group" or "difficult and blocking all the good

things we have to offer". This attitude will of course be reflected in the continued work: a general dissatisfaction rumbles in the rooms.

As a trainer you can get really annoyed if you feel that some participants are not taking the exercises seriously, so everybody gets caught up in a web of unsaid and broken expectations to each other. Participants expecting a different kind of "teacher" and trainers expecting a different kind of (read: more emotionally capable) participants.

To my mind it is too easy to blame such difficulties on the participants. As a trainer you have the responsibility to understand these mechanisms - and resistance, I feel, is to be expected.

When met with complaints many trainers fall into the pit of arguing with the participants. This usually takes up a lot of time and frees the participants from dealing with how an exercise may affect them personally and emotionally.

Of course, resistance, distance and more or less aggressive criticism are not always a matter of participants' unconscious transformation of repressed fear. In some cases trainers should definitely be criticised. For instance when an attempt to stay in control causes the trainer to be so out of touch with the needs and wishes of the participants that good learning options are disrupted.

Here are some hints about methods that I have used to prevent resistance and the potential aggression involved from evolving into major conflict and loss of the always limited and thus valuable time:

- 1 Speak openly and directly what you see happening and analyse the process.
- 2 Use small theory-inputs (e.g. from communication or conflict theory) explaining why a situation is difficult to handle. It can calm people to connect an intellectual explanation to the emotional experience of the situation. The feelings are then "normalised" - we have them in common.
- 3 Use yourself as an example. Explain and visualise how you have learned to tackle a similar situation. In this way you make the participants understand that you have understood and accepted

- the situation.
- 4 Agree with the criticism and clear the air. Form working groups to free participants from the pressure and powerlessness of some plenaries (you can also ask them to come up with 2-3 solutions to the alleged problem).
 - 5 Ask participants to make their own estimate of how much time they need for group work. Often they sense this better than you and your plan does.
 - 6 Stop focusing on the disappointed and resisting participants and base examples on the quiet and positive people.
 - 7 Be a dynamo and try pumping initiatives into the group when you sense resistance and fear of change (but be aware of your limitations, because this can be exhausting).

The European Commission's White Paper Coyote theme

in Coyote No3, November 2002

“A new impetus for European Youth” and Non-formal Education”

One of the most important policy documents on youth to emerge from the European Commission, the White Paper sets the agenda for the coming years. It recognises the role of non-formal education for the development of young people and the making of youth policy. In the frame of lifelong learning it places special emphasis on youth. It is also an expression of the Commission's aim to promote new forms of European governance, which are more open, participatory, accountable, effective and coherent. These aims have been expressed in the unprecedented scale of consultation in the process of production of the White Paper with various actors in the field of youth, including young people, youth researchers and policy makers. They also manifest themselves in the “open method of co-ordination” and the recommendation to take youth into account in other policy areas.

Expectations towards the White Paper were high, and reactions to the final document range from satisfaction and great hope to disappointment and frustration - Hope because of the emphasis that the White Paper places on non-formal education and on co-operation between different actors in the development of youth policy. Frustration because in terms of

content the specific recommendations of the document are less concrete than many of the demands that were formulated by the young people and other experts involved in the consultation process.

Being a key youth policy document for the countries in Europe, the White Paper will influence, and should also figure in training in European youth work. After all, valorising non-formal education will place more emphasis on the kind of qualities and competencies that can be gained through it. Training might therefore take on another importance and be judged more strongly by the specific quality standards it stands for and the values and policies it promotes.

But do the recommendations made by the White Paper go far enough to create change? What is the potential of this document to promote e.g. youth participation in the development of youth policy and non-formal education in the different countries, and at European level? What dynamics can be created by the proposed methods: the open method of co-ordination and taking youth into account in other policy areas? And how can actors in the youth field use the White Paper and related documents, such as the lifelong learning strategy, in their own work? [...]

The impact of lifelong learning on non-formal learning in youth by H.-J. Schild

in The White Paper on Youth and the lifelong learning strategy: a new impetus for non-formal learning?

in Coyote No6, November 2002

As seen before non-formal learning in the youth context will have an important impact on the implementation of the lifelong learning strategy. But what of the possible impact the lifelong learning strategy will have - vice versa - on non-formal learning in youth activities?

Regarding the aspect of valuing learning, of complementarity of all forms of learning and a better recognition of non-formal learning it must be underlined that in the youth sector mainly a better social recognition seems to be an appropriate strategy: the acknowledgement of the value of competencies, acquired in youth activities, by economic and social stakeholders. The value of competencies means predominantly aiming at personal fulfilment, social integration and active citizenship and only secondly to employability.

The aspect of formal recognition of competencies in the sense of granting official status to competencies, gained in a non-formal setting, is much more difficult to discuss. The introduction of assessment, evaluation, certification procedures normally found in the formal education sector has its benefits towards giving greater employability and is targeted towards the labour market. This is not a complete guarantee of improved quality in training standards and we acknowledge that in this process non-formal training may lose flexibility and attraction to young people.

Nevertheless, in today's "knowledge society" it may be necessary to certificate (and to

describe) what young people learn and do in youth activities, not mainly to improve employability, but to encourage them towards citizenship, personal development and self-confidence. In this direction also formal recognition has to be promoted. The youth field will have the task to provide high quality youth work with an open access for all young people on the one hand and to provide appropriate tools by avoiding over-formalising what it offers on the other. Non-formal learning in the youth sector must keep its unconventional and innovative approaches and openness.

Concerning information and guidance the youth field should insist on a holistic approach by promoting services, which are not reduced to formal aspects of learning and of integrating into the labour market. The needs of young people concerning information and guidance are manifold and not restricted to these issues. Social integration, individual support and active citizenship need a comprehensive approach.

Efforts to make visible and publicise regularly the outcomes of non-formal learning that result from the activities of youth organisations will have an impact on evaluation and publication procedures in the youth field at all levels. The link to social recognition of non-formal learning is evident and all actors should take responsibility to improve the visibility of youth activities. Young people should be fully involved in the publication strategies and be part of them.

Non-formal Experiment? by Conchi Gallego

in Coyote No6, November 2002

In this article I will try to analyse how non-formal education issues were tackled in the process of consultation for the White Paper, and how the apparently successful outcome was reached.

The results of the White Paper: a new impetus

for European youth have been quite far away from the demands of young people in general and, more specifically, from the proposals made by youth organisations.

During the process of consultation, many people, organisations, institutions and experts

participated giving their opinions, making proposals, and contributing to the process of creating this document.

The White Paper will “rule” the youth issues at the EU level for the coming years (maybe decades) and it will influence not only the EU member states but also those other countries which are part of the different programmes and co-operate in various actions lines of the EU.

We have to make a positive evaluation of the inclusion of the value of non-formal education in this White Paper. We also have to be concerned about the fact that it has been mentioned as an “area of experimentation”. It is not true that the non-formal education field is something new - yes, it is an area of continuous experimentation, that is probably one of its main values. But it is my concern that how this is described in the White Paper it seems that it is a field of work that has just started - when we know that this is not close to reality.

This shows an odd way of treating this field of work as the Council of Europe has considered non-formal education as a priority for many years already. Even if the European Union refuses to mention this in the White Paper, in daily life it recognises this experience in different ways; the Partnership Agreement signed by both institutions is an example of this recognition. Also the “still small” amount of money of the EU allocated for International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations is an example of the support that the EU has been giving to this field in the past. We can affirm then, that non-formal education is not a new field of work for the EU.

One of the reasons why I consider that this “misunderstanding” keeps on happening is the lack of knowledge that still exists in the EU institutions about this field of work and its different aspects, values and methodologies.

It is not only a matter of the concepts and theory that young people acquire through non-formal education (which of course are also very valuable), but also the values that a young person “absorbs” when being involved in youth work and that are impossible to be gained in any other educational sphere. These are, for instance: group work, intercultural and communication skills, values like democracy,

participation, negotiation... and I could go further but I guess that there are already plenty of researches that can show and explain in a deeper way what I just mentioned.

In order to explain what I want to say with this statement, I will just give some examples of what I have seen in the process of consultation for the elaboration of this White Paper. This process has been once more a clearly missed opportunity to involve youth organisations and non-formal education methodology effectively in the process, and practise the so long requested co-management with youth organisations.

The consultation started on the National level, and each country decided how they would reach young people, and how they would “consult” them.

Some examples of these methodologies were: internet debates and chats, a weekend on a boat, training and debate seminars of young people, questionnaires... Some of these methodologies were inappropriate in order to reach a representative group of people, to gain a valid input, or a legitimate contribution. For instance, the anonymous inputs done through a web page don't give in my opinion enough credibility to the results, on the one hand because it is impossible to check that the personal information that someone gives in order to participate in such a debate is true (it could be older people or even people from other countries giving their opinions), and on the other hand the way people give their opinions when they are “anonymous” varies from a “face to face” moment.

At the European level, the EU has “forgotten” in some specific moments of the process the role of representative bodies such as youth organisations, youth councils and of course the European Youth Forum. It is remarkable that there is not even one mention of International Youth Organisations in the whole White Paper (at least in the main body of the document where the Commission sets up the priorities and defines partners and their roles). The Commission goal was to reach as many people as possible, not understanding the point that - at European level - consultation on different matters must be done on a qualitative basis and not on a quantitative one.

One of the mistakes of this process was to ignore what has been practised successfully by youth organisations over the last decades: non-formal methodology and experiences. This led us to quite unfruitful discussions on most of the occasions, with debates about debates and various conferences with no real objectives or aims.

This is maybe then, the reason why the EU keeps on considering non-formal education as an experimental field. It is based on the lack of knowledge among the different institutions, and the civil servants working in them (who in the end are the ones organising the different activities), the lack of co-management experience and work with young people. It is a great challenge to learn from each other and I hope that the example of co-management in

the Council of Europe, mentioned so often in the process of consultation, is seriously taken by the Commission. It is maybe time to “open the doors” of our houses in order to get to know each other better.

Anyway, we have to take this opportunity to claim for better knowledge and understanding of youth issues and specifically of non-formal education. We have to give our opinions in other open debates that have a direct link with the work that we do, such as the Lifelong Learning, governance, the future of Europe.

The voice of youth organisations in these debates has to be heard in the European policy discussions.

Valuing non-formal education by Alicja Szpot

in Coyote No6, November 2002

[...] I represent the generation of Polish people who were young in the 1980s, when the Polish government was “at war” with its own people, particularly young people. As young people in Poland at that time, we never dreamed of a common Europe. The political regime used to ensure any fresh initiatives were nipped in the bud and block any moves towards citizenship and personal freedom. Freedom of expression and association were banned. My own education and that of my friends consisted for the most part in opposing the Polish government and supporting activities directed against it. The feeling that we were not free was very strong, and we had a strong urge to emigrate. It was very difficult to travel outside Poland at that time, however, and very few of us had the opportunity to do so.

I was one of the lucky ones. As a student, between the ages of 20 and 25, I used to spend the holidays travelling in Europe on the lookout for odd jobs. As I was obviously short of money, I used to hitch-hike. These travel adventures were my “non-formal education” and a period of “intercultural learning”. All the different people I met on my travels, with their different living conditions and opinions, and the very strong sense of independence and freedom I acquired, or rather the sense that I was

learning about freedom and mobility and responsibility were even more fascinating, I found, than the great wealth of regions and historic monuments. I used to come back after every holiday more mature, more self-confident and more fulfilled, full of enthusiasm and hope for the future.

This feeling I had of developing and progressing strengthened my desire to keep moving and keep making new discoveries. As a result, for the last ten years I have been in charge of youth exchanges at the Youth Centre in Cracow and for the past two years I have been employed as a trainer under the Youth Programme, in spite of my technical background which would not normally have marked me out for this kind of employment. And, even now, I have the feeling that I am constantly learning something new. Every activity, every exchange, every training course, and every seminar is for me a source of new and enriching discoveries. My education is therefore not yet complete, and there are still a few ideas I would like to see come to fruition.

I am therefore all in favour of developing any activities that give rise to “non-formal education”, which can give such a boost to all young people, and particularly those forced to

switch careers or suffering from unemployment.

With “non-formal education” there are no qualifications or certificates but what it does do is encourage young people to become adaptable, while broadening their horizons and bringing them closer to other people. It is important to make the most of such education, therefore, because in many ways it is your future.

In the course of my work with them during training courses, I have noticed that youth leaders and teachers are often not even aware of the concept of “non-formal education”. Their ignorance is no doubt due partly to the general youth policy situation in Poland but possibly also to the efforts of the trainers under the European youth programmes. When presenting the Youth Programme, perhaps we have a tendency to pay too much attention to all the practical aspects involved, such as the applications, funding arrangements and deadlines, with the result that we neglect the educational aspects.

The White Paper signals to us that it is time to change our practices. “Non-formal education” must have the recognition it deserves and must

be put to better use. We need better definitions of the concepts, as well as the skills acquired and quality standards.

The people involved in these activities need to know that their work is valued. With the White Paper we have a tool for drawing the attention of youth organisations and youth leaders to the importance and value of their “non-formal” work and its recognition by the European Commission. We can also make more specific suggestions. The “open coordination” method provides youth leaders with a way of ensuring that the European Commission knows about their initiatives and examples of good practices. They will also be able to take advantage of a great many initiatives, such as the establishment of a European consultation body for young people or the “information for all” project. This in turn will mean they are better able to bring their youth activities into line with the objectives regarded by the Commission as being important for European youth.

We, as trainers, can be the driving force behind moves, starting at grassroots level, to ensure that the full value of “non-formal education” is gradually realised.

The impact of the White Paper on Youth on non-formal education by R. McCabe & H. Södermann *in Coyote No6, November 2002*

Introduction

The European Commission White Paper 'A New Impetus for European Youth' was adopted on 21 November 2001. It was the result of an eighteen-month long consultation process that involved different groups from the EU Member States, the EEA and the Candidate Countries. On the same day, the Commission launched its Communication on Lifelong Learning 'Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality'. The Communication was also the result of a six-month consultation process with Member States and members of civil society. As of now, no EU policy on non-formal education exists specifically for European youth. However, these two policy documents combined together represent a step forward on the road to

promoting non-formal education for young people.

The Communication on lifelong learning, on the other hand, defines non-formal learning as 'learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective' (Commission Communication on Lifelong Learning, p.33). Youth organisations are a good example of non-formal education providers. By participating in youth organisations, young people develop skills relevant to different contexts and have the opportunity to put them

into immediate practice.

Non-formal education in the White Paper

The actual White Paper on youth (excluding the annexes) is merely 21 pages long. It gives an overview of the challenges for youth in Europe, identifies the key messages from the consultation process and finally makes some policy recommendations that would be implemented using the open method of co-ordination and by taking youth into account in other policy areas. The policy proposals only cover seven pages - the actual provisions on non-formal education, no more than seven lines!

In the White Paper on youth, the first annex gives a summary of the consultation process stating 'what young people want' from a European youth policy. With regard to non-formal education, the many demands are not really translated into policy recommendations: the Commission promotes non-formal education in general terms, but does not make concrete proposals to ensure recognition of it and putting it on an equal footing with formal education.

Proposals of young people on non-formal education

In the White Paper on youth, the first annex looks at the results of the consultation. Two clear messages relating to non-formal education were given by the young people who took part.

Greater recognition of non-formal education

According to the White Paper, young people seem to be very enthusiastic about the possibilities offered by non-formal education as an attractive counterpart to a formal education system that they often consider as inefficient. The consultation process highlighted the fact that there is a lack of understanding of the benefits of non-formal learning in general and that there is a need to strengthen the awareness of key persons and institutions in society in order to promote non-formal education as an integral part of learning and education. However, they believe that 'effective ways must be found for recognising skills acquired through formal and non-formal learning methods. The role of non-formal learning and the need for a better understanding and recognition of non-formally acquired skills through youth work should be

emphasised'. (p.34) They ask that the 'relevance of non-formal education and the complementary character of formal and non-formal learning should be made more visible' and that 'dialogue between the relevant actors in the field, as well as social partners, researchers and policy makers will be needed with a view to improving the recognition of non-formal learning' (p.36) They ask that youth organisations should regularly publicise the wide range of non-formal learning opportunities and the outcomes of non-formal learning projects.' (p.37)

Greater links between formal and non-formal education

According to the White Paper, young people who took part in the consultation believe that 'non-formal learning should not lose its open character and turn into a formal structure by imitating the formal education system'. (p.35) but that both are complementary. Non-formal and informal learning are essential in developing the skills that young people need today. They believe that 'joint strategies on the part of the various organisations providing education (schools, training centres, enterprises, communities, youth work) would seem to be appropriate if we are to improve our understanding of what new basic skills are and how they can be taught and learnt'. (p.33) They ask that joint projects should be created to build bridges between non-formal and formal systems. They also ask that mobility and voluntary service be incorporated into the formal education system.

Policy recommendations of the Commission

While the aspirations of young people as highlighted by the annex on the consultation process seem to be reasonable and practically grounded, the actual policy recommendations made are limited compared to young people's expectations. The White Paper proposes two methods of driving youth policy forward; that greater account be taken of youth in other policy areas and secondly, by using the open method of co-ordination in youth policy. However, sufficient account is already taken of youth in education policy and the open method of co-ordination is already used here. Therefore, in terms of non-formal education, the methods proposed are far from revolutionary.

Taking youth into account in education,

lifelong learning and mobility

The White Paper feels that greater consideration should be given to youth in education, lifelong learning and mobility policies. It recognises the work that youth associations are doing in non-formal education and believes that this should be promoted as part of their lifelong learning strategy. The Commission rightly states that the work of youth associations would benefit from 'a clearer definition of the concepts, of the skills acquired and of quality standards', 'a higher regard for the people who become involved in these activities', 'greater recognition of these activities' and 'greater complementarity with formal education and training systems'. Policy measures as to how these aims could be achieved in practice are unfortunately left open in the White Paper.

As a first concrete example of how youth could be taken into account in other policy areas, it is interesting to observe the Commission's Communication on lifelong learning. While the Communication mentions youth organisations, no specific provisions are made for youth. The Commission states that it will establish 'an inventory of methodologies, systems and standards for the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.' It encourages the Member States to 'provide the legal framework to implement more widely the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning'.(p.17). Under the section on 'valuing learning', the Commission states that it will 'initiate by the end of 2002 a systematic exchange of experience and good practice in the field of identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning.' (p.16) However, it is the 'European Forum on the Transparency of Qualifications' who should co-ordinate this'. This Forum is managed by the Commission and Cedefop, the European Agency for Vocational Education and Training. So far the Forum has solely concentrated on the recognition of non-formal vocational qualifications, but not on non-formal qualifications acquired in settings outside the workplace.

Clearly, stronger links need to be established between the work of the European Union in the field of youth and the field of lifelong learning. In this sense it is very positive that the Spanish presidency has recently proposed to look at

lifelong learning as one of the first policy areas where greater account should be taken of youth.

Open method of co-ordination in voluntary service

In the White Paper on youth, the Commission recognises voluntary service as a form of non-formal education, and proposes to make voluntary service one of the themes to be dealt with under the "Open Method of Co-ordination" in the youth field. It states that at European level, 'it is important to ensure that voluntary service is recognised as an educational experience and a period of non-formal learning.' It states that 'it may be necessary to reflect on the situation of young volunteers in terms of legal and social protection'. This is a step in the right direction that should lead to concrete proposals to overcome the many difficulties volunteers are facing in this regard.

The White Paper suggests using the open method of co-ordination to 'develop voluntary service significantly at national, regional and local levels". To do so, it would be necessary to define the strategic objectives in the context of a timeframe such as those for the European Employment Strategy or the Social Inclusion Process. The Open Method of Co-ordination has typically been used to co-ordinate national policies where the policy area remains the competence of the Member State. In the White Paper mention is made - ambitiously - of 'national, regional and local levels'. In the next steps, it would be necessary to clarify which measures are directed at which level and how they can be implemented.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the recommendations made by young people in the consultation process for the White Paper concerning non-formal education have been far-reaching, the actual policy recommendations made by the Commission are much less concrete. In order to take steps forward to promote non-formal education, more work needs to be done based on the White Paper. Therefore, the impact that the White Paper will have on non-formal education for young people will depend on the national governments: what level of priority will be given to the issue in the next steps of the process?

The Communication on Lifelong Learning with

its concrete recommendations and clear division of responsibilities, even though it is not specifically addressed to youth, would seem to present a great opportunity for promoting non-formal education for young people.

Together, these two policy documents combined represent a step forward on the road to promoting non-formal education for young people. In this sense, the Spanish initiative to make the Lifelong learning a policy area where

the youth dimension is taken into account is very promising.

The youth organisations, the national youth councils and the Youth Forum are working for a better recognition of non-formal education. Thanks to the White Paper, in the coming months we will have a chance to promote it. To get to the desired result, it is up to the youth sector to make the most of this opportunity!

Wide angle: Quality of Training: Myth or Mystery? by Andreas Karsten in Coyote No 10, May 2005

Do you know how good non-formal education really is?

I mean, it must be good - there is an ever-growing demand for it, people feel good and enjoy themselves much more than at school or university, and one can feel, sometimes even see the impact. But do you really know just how good it truly is? You don't? I don't either. And I don't believe anyone who says they do. Like many good things in life, non-formal education is slightly absurd: One reason it's so good is that nobody is tested to see what they have learned. No tests, no grades.

It puts people's minds at rest and makes participation a choice rather than a duty. That freedom has a price, though: it makes it rather difficult to analyse the level of quality of learning. That's the crux of non-formal education. You can't start giving people grades to show how very well they have done on your training course, because if you did they wouldn't do well anymore. Yet, as more money and hope flows into the sector, pressure and demand are increasing to prove how good this whole non-formal education business is. The whispered stories of success; are they myths to be disproved or the truth wrapped in mystery?

For quite some time these questions have been at the centre of discussions in pubs and meetings alike. Where else could the debate progress better than in Leuven, the city of beer, at "Bridges for Recognition", the latest conference to promote recognition of youth work across Europe?

Consequently, it was right for more than 45

trainers to agree there and then to voice their own opinion more strongly. We the trainers, and our qualifications, have been discussed for quite some time. Irritated and agitated, we reluctantly followed the process, usually pointing out that defining quality standards (not to speak of quality assessment!) is against the nature of non-formal education. After all, what good is non-formal learning when it all becomes formalised? On the other hand we claim that trainers and teachers are alike; that educators have an enormous amount of responsibility. Responsibility for the money which they spend and which others, of course, invest. But we especially mean the educational responsibility, constituting a power which is easily misused and sometimes even abused. Who can blame the rest of the world for wanting some measure of accountability? We tell parents that something magical is going to happen to their kids, asking them to entrust their children to us for training courses, youth exchanges, and even outdoor education activities. We tell funders that non-formal education stabilises democracy, promotes human rights and human dignity, facilitates intercultural communication and produces mature young people with social skills unheard of, and invite them to finance our educational programmes. We tell politicians that our work complements formal education to a near-perfect match, and call for more recognition and support.

Our call has been heard: The sector of non-formal education has grown in terms of financial investment, political recognition and educational influence. This, in return, has given

rise to a demand hardly any of us imagined in the beginning and which almost everyone tried to ignore for a long time. As a result people also want us to prove that our work is as good as we say - and make others believe.

This is a request no one can sensibly argue with as it's by all means justifiable. People want to see that their money is money well spent, and that their trust in our educational skills is based on fact rather than hope. From this point of view it seems just a little inconsistent to me to categorically refuse accountability for the trust we previously requested with such insistence.

My feeling grew stronger that the youth movement, once so successful in lobbying for the recognition of non-formal education, was disconnecting itself from the change and progress made over the past years. But in the spirit of Alan Kay, the trainers attending "Bridges for Recognition" decided to predict the future by inventing it themselves. After all, who is better qualified and trained to set quality standards and criteria for non-formal youth trainers than us?

Our ad-hoc "hot-issue" workshop was joined by a surprising number of stakeholders: researchers, trainers, and representatives from international institutions, national agencies,

the European Youth Forum and national governments. There was clearly support for the idea!

And the result is not bad either: The workshop drew up a proposal for an open, transparent and inclusive process to establish an occupational profile of non-formal youth trainers - a first at European level - and a proposal to the Training Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission which can't be ignored.

Of course, this proposal, which can be read and discussed on the you@etv virtual platform (<http://communities.trainingvillage.gr/youth>) cannot provide answers to all the questions arising. Neither can I, to be honest with you - I don't even know all the questions which have to be asked and answered. But I believe in the truth of the following words by Sir Arthur Charles Clarke: "The only way to discover the limits of the possible is to go beyond them into the impossible."

It may seem impossible today to think of a reliable and adequate set of quality standards and a just and open system of quality assessment in non-formal education. But the day will come when we know better.

Milestones for formal and social recognition of non-formal and informal learning in youth work - by H.-J. Schild *In Coyote N° 11 - May 2006*

Youth workers and leaders

With regard to the specific recognition of competences of youth workers and youth leaders, the decision of the Council of Europe's European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) of 2003, to develop a portfolio on non-formal education of youth workers and youth leaders was a real milestone. Based on this decision the Council of Europe invited an expert group to produce an instrument to describe experiences and competences in the youth field as well as to enable users to assess and monitor learning progresses. The European Portfolio for Youth Workers and Youth Leaders is based on a functional analysis of what youth workers and leaders should be and do; from this is drawn a framework of competences which individuals

are invited to use as a self-assessment tool and then to gain feedback from their peers and colleagues. A test phase involving a control group of 250 youth workers and leaders from across Europe (plus those who are interested and download the portfolio from the internet) will lead to a finalised version to be published and distributed from the beginning of 2007.

The European Youth Pact

The European Youth Pact confirms and supplements the strategies for a better recognition of non-formal learning and of youth work in the follow-up of the White Paper on Youth. The Pact identifies employment and social inclusion as key concerns and as major priorities on which to concentrate in order to

enable young people to play an active role in society. Non-formal and informal learning contribute essentially to the personal development, social inclusion, active citizenship and employability of young people. The European Youth Pact must be seen as an important tool within the Lisbon Strategy for reaching the major goal of including all young people in society. The Pact with its focus on the meaning of non-formal learning in the youth

field still needs to be effectively implemented by Member States. It is crucial that young people and their organisations should be seen as key partners together with other stakeholders in the follow-up process and should be closely involved in implementing the European Youth Pact and its impact on recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the youth field.

European information, young people and non-formal learning by B. Payne & R.-E. Voinea

in Coyote N°11- May 2006

You need it... we need it... they need it ! So, what is it, where is it and how do we get it ?

Young people and information

Since Eurodesk [<http://www.eurodesk.org>] started providing European information early in 1990, the information field has changed dramatically: it now appears that almost anyone can find whatever they want after a few mouse clicks. The Internet has become an important factor for all information providers and users today and perhaps especially for young people, who seem to be very much at home in this medium. For us in the Eurodesk Network it has made our work easier in many ways. There is so much information around now - but the challenge remains to maintain the quality, reliability, and credibility of online information for young people. And to remember that not everyone can be online whenever they want and not everyone has the skills to find exactly what they need. We also need to remember that as well as those whose jobs involve working with young people and information, there are many thousands of people acting as multipliers with young people from the NGO sector, local communities, schools, libraries, youth clubs, sports clubs etc..., who play an important role in informing young people and in facilitating their participation in non-formal activities. This can be a big resource, if we can capitalise on it. Politics again ... !

When it comes to providing information for young people, there are real variations from country to country, in Europe, in the levels of political support for information activities and

the funding made available for such services. This is really a discussion for another time and place, but there is light on the horizon ...

At European level, information for young people has been slowly climbing the political agenda. There has been support for information activities with young people for many years, both from the Council of Europe and from the European Commission. The consultation on the white paper "A new impetus for European Youth", afforded young people the opportunity to make their voices heard. They said, loud and clear, that access to quality information was vitally important for them and availability of information had to be improved. Since then, information for young people has remained firmly on the European political agenda, through the Open Method of Co-ordination and the Common Objectives on information for young people. A high profile initiative at the end of 2004 by 6 heads of state resulted in a political commitment by the European Union to the European Youth Pact. While this is more generally concerned with the impact of major EU policies on young people, it also has real implications for the future development of information services for young people. At the beginning of December, in the concluding session of the European Youth Week 2005, "Youth Takes the Floor" conference, the spokesperson for the young participants reassured the conference that, despite the recent referendum results, young people do still wish to be actively involved in the future of Europe.

Finally, the Commission's Plan D and the white

paper “On a European Communication Policy”, demonstrate the continuing importance of access to information on Europe. What is European information and how do you find it? ... Well, “information about Europe” is the easy answer but there’s more to it than that. In the context of Eurodesk’s daily activities, ‘European information’ covers information relating to European activities for young people, such as exchanges, volunteering, work and study abroad and the European funding possibilities for these activities. This information can also be called “mobility information”; information about opportunities for young people to get involved in activities outside their own country. Eurodesk has a major role to play for the European Commission in providing this kind of information to those who work with young people, as well as providing it to young people themselves. We consider that it is more effective if young people and their intermediaries both have access to European information. If both sides of this partnership are informed, positive action is perhaps more likely to result. The role of the multipliers should not be underestimated.

The European Youth Portal, which targets young people directly with information, also has content related to mobility activities (studying, working, volunteering, active citizenship, your rights, travelling Europe). These themes were selected specifically on the basis that the information offers young people practical opportunities to get involved. This will in turn encourage their commitment to active citizenship. Under the theme ‘Studying’ there is also a section on non-formal learning. The link between European activities and developing active citizenship among young people is a major reason for supporting and promoting youth activities at European level. In Eurodesk we see all these “European activities”, or “mobility opportunities”, as a significant part of the non-formal education/learning curriculum for young people. You could say that much of the available European information is about non-formal learning opportunities aimed at broadening horizons, meeting young people from other countries, personal development, encouraging involvement and decision-making. Many youth workers regard European activities as among the most effective methods for encouraging young people “towards active citizenship, solidarity, personal development and self-fulfilment, voluntary activities and

self-confidence.” This is how the Council of Europe and the European Commission stated their main motivation in developing their common position on education, training and learning. This is not new territory for Eurodesk either, since it was born out of the non-formal education field in Scotland 16 years ago and still operates with the same educational principles of encouraging personal development, capacity building and self help.

If what we say is true, there should be a very strong connection between the providers of European information and the actors in the non-formal education and learning field. Reaching all young people with European information might be difficult ...no, it IS difficult; reaching those who work with young people has proved to be easier. The chances of reaching 90 million young people in Europe with European information are remote !! However, using the multipliers who work on a daily basis with young people increases the chance of providing access to information where it is needed. In attempting to tackle some of the issues surrounding European Information, Eurodesk has found itself delivering more and more training modules for professionals working with young people. This is one way in which we try and improve the knowledge and skills relating to European information in the youth field. In Eurodesk we do not offer professional training to become youth workers or youth information workers but we do offer very practical training modules relating to European information ... how to find it and how to use it with young people. There is not a huge body of academic data or previous training courses relating to work with European information and young people, so the professionals in the Eurodesk network represent much of the expertise available in this field. Their experience is vital to improving the training available in this field and we take care to use all their feedback in developing the modules. In our training we ask the question, ‘Who needs to know what?’ Do the information workers need to know different things from the young people? The answer we always get is ‘Yes.’ The youth workers tell us that they need to know generally how things work at European level and, particularly, where to find the information that young people ask about. They don’t need to know everything but they do need to know where to find it! While it is true that on a day-to-day basis few of us need to know all the

details of the EU's decision-making processes, etc., it is generally felt that people working with young people and information need a certain level of background information about Europe in order to be able to help the young people with their questions. One of the keys to this information world is knowing what kind of European information is likely to be available to answer a young person's question and then the next stage is where to find it.

As always, young people want to get information when they ask for it - not a few weeks later when we've done the research! This is a challenge for the intermediaries, so, in the training, we try to give information workers enough background knowledge to know what they are looking for and training on the relevant information tools so that they can find the information quickly and easily for their clients.

This includes being able to know when there is a European dimension behind a non-formal question even though the enquirer, the young person, might not know it and might not have asked for it. Young people are unlikely to know all the opportunities that exist, so they can't ask about them. We see it as part of the worker's role to give young people a comprehensive answer to their questions, and this often includes also telling them about European opportunities relevant to their enquiry, even though the young person may not have requested this specifically. This helps the young person to have a full picture of the situation before making their decisions. We are experiencing an increasing demand for this kind of training both from within and outside the Eurodesk network.

Most of the training we offer is designed to help the participants develop personal methods of

finding the information they need, understand what young people need to know and how to answer their enquiries, create easy ways to stay informed in the "information jungle" and stay in touch with other professionals from other countries.

what next ...

This article has taken a brief look at the links between European information for young people and non-formal education and learning from the perspective of Eurodesk - the Commission's main information relay for young people. The need for effective communication and access to European information is still high on the European agenda. Much more could be said here and certainly much more can be done in reality. Some final thoughts:

- Information is so prevalent and so important in today's world that all youth intermediaries, including those involved in the non-formal education sector, could benefit from knowing about the tools and methodologies for finding and managing European information for the benefit of their young clients;
- European/mobility opportunities have so much learning potential for young people that every opportunity should be used to alert young people to these possibilities and encourage their participation. One way to achieve this is through offering training sessions and seminars to professionals on finding and using European information relevant to young people;
- Imagine if every youth worker, teacher, trainer, youth intermediary was able to help young people access, evaluate and use this European information ... ;
- Seeking ways of increasing co-operation between Euro desk and the actors in the non-formal education sector could be beneficial;
- Training courses in the non-formal education sector could include a module on European information.

A step towards the recognition of Non-formal education in Serbia and Montenegro By D. Markovic

in Coyote N°11- May 2006

This article describes the project on the recognition of non-formal education implemented by my organization Grupa "Hajde da.." in Serbia and Montenegro, from June 2005 to February 2006. It is also about invisibility and

accumulated frustration over the years. At the same time it is about personal (and professional ?) experiences from the training room when working on recognition issues. The way I have decided to approach it is to tell you 5 short stories.

“Non-formal education is something illegal; it is when you can buy a diploma”
Unknown passer-by from Belgrade, interviewed by the course participants

Story No.1

One of the most difficult questions in my life.

No, it is not a question about the meaning of life, but something much more down-to-earth and what I face on a daily basis. If I were to explain what I do for a living in the simplest way, I'd say, “I work as a trainer in non-formal education”. A simple and clear statement, isn't it? But just for the readers of Coyote and a little bit beyond this community of practice. During our local training seminars on the recognition of non-formal education, when trying to explain the reasons why “Hajde da...” group started the project, I usually tell the following anecdote: A situation that I experience almost every day is when I meet some old friend of mine (in particular a person who is not connected to what we call the Third Sector) and s/he asks me about what I do for living. And then I think, if I use the above statement...well, first, the word “trainer” is mostly associated with sports, and second, the word “non-formal education” rings no bells for that person. Oops, it seems I have a problem here. So, I try to explain it using a more familiar association. “I support people to learn in an interesting and creative way”. “So, you are teaching?” they ask. “Not really, although sometimes I give short lectures,” I say. “Then you are some kind of a teacher”. And then I just give up and continue living with a feeling of bitterness and frustration at being invisible, something I've been feeling for years. When I tell this little story to the participants of the local training seminars, I see their smiles of understanding and - recognition!

Story No.2

Labour market

The second situation I told about in the seminars was when I wanted to get registered at the National Employment Service to get my grey-sleeved worker's identity card. As I entered the office, pinned to the opposite wall I saw a photocopied A4 sheet with the following underlined sentence: only school diplomas are recorded. At that time, I was still studying psychology and had only a diploma from my secondary school of mechanics (a field that I left many years ago). Standing there I was

wondering:

“What about my years of non-formal education, and my extensive work experience as an (inter)national trainer?”. Those competences of mine were (and still are) completely invisible to potential employers! Again, came smiles of recognition in the seminar group, but this time followed with small sighs of sympathy and worry.

Story No.3

No fear of recognition

In 2002 within the context of the new school system reform in Serbia, the Ministry of Education acknowledged the need for teachers' professional development and the fostering of lifelong learning. In support of this, the Ministry established the system of teachers' professional development, opening up the possibility for non-formal education providers to apply for accreditation of their teacher training programs. Fortunately when we applied with two programmes, both of them were selected. Then, our intercultural learning teacher training programme “The Alphabet of Tolerance” was realized with many groups of teachers all over the country. During those courses the motivation of the teachers increased significantly - this was certainly a lot to do with their intrinsic motivation and interest in the topic, but finally their efforts were also being formally recognized. It was very interesting that although we got formal recognition for our programmes (meaning our participants getting certificates from us which were officially recognized by the Ministry), still we were not assimilated into the formal system and could maintain our autonomy. That was a very good example of partnership between the formal and non-formal education sectors. Being recognized, for the first time, we saw the benefits for all and it felt very good indeed. Later we also learned a lesson of how political changes could “undo” the positive improvements...but that's another story.

Story No.4

About the project...

With such accumulated frustration and lack of fear of recognition we have initiated our project entitled “Non-formal education in Europe - a step towards the recognition of NFE in Serbia and Montenegro”, funded by both European Commission and the Council of Europe. The intention of the project was to create a large scale discussion space and be the

first step towards better recognition of non-formal education in our country. The main idea of the project was to create networks between different stakeholders, to spread the news about what is going on in Europe within this field, to compare it with the situation in Serbia

and Montenegro and see where/how/with whom we would like to go in the future. The concept of the project is presented in the table below using the “legendary” 3P triangle (in this article appearing as a 3P table):
[...]

Reforming the concept of education through the recognition of Non-Formal Education. The position of the European Youth Forum by P. T. Madsen

in Coyote N° 11- May 2006

[...] Indeed, there has been increasing recognition over the years of the fact that not everyone is the same when it comes to educational needs. In today's 'knowledge-based-society' it is essential that we recognise the need to fully exhibit the real competencies of young people and allow them the space and opportunity to flourish. To this end it is becoming more and more accepted that there are attributes and benefits to be found outside of the formal education sphere. Non-formal education (NFE), as a structured learning process, has been receiving mounting attention in recent years, but still needs more...

The European Youth Forum, the pan-European platform gathering 93 members from both national youth councils and international youth organisations, defines NFE as a structured process that gives young people the possibility to develop their values, skills and competencies other than the ones developed under the framework of formal education. These include a wide range of competencies such as interpersonal, leadership, organisational, conflict management, planning and practical problem-solving skills, teamwork, self-confidence, discipline and responsibility. Working with young people from all over Europe and elsewhere, the European Youth Forum has the unique opportunity of gathering young people's ideas and experiences of the learning process in a non-formal setting, that is, through youth organisations. Indeed at its Council of Members meeting (COMEM) in November 2005, delegates gathered to discuss and adopt a Policy Paper 'Recognition of Non Formal Education: Confirming the real competencies of young people in the knowledge society'. As the title suggests, the Paper deals with the issue of recognition of NFE, at the political level but

also at all levels in society; exploring ways in which this recognition can be successfully achieved. We believe that the paper accurately portrays the reality of the need to recognise non-formal education and its outcomes, together with the need to strengthen the complementarity between formal and non-formal education.

It is necessary to broaden and deepen our understanding of education so as to incorporate non-formal education in a perspective of lifewide and lifelong learning. For this to occur, traditional concepts and recognition of education must adapt. With so much emphasis today being placed on educational attainment through formal systems, such as Bachelor and Master Degrees, PhDs, diplomas, certificates and so forth, it is becoming necessary that we recognise non-formal education achievements. Focusing on real competencies implies valuing people's full range of skills whether gained through formal or non-formal methods. One such way to do so is through co-operation with youth organisations, one of the primary providers of NFE.

The youth organisations that compose our membership are some of the primary structures through which people can access NFE. Youth organisations are active providers of non-formal education at all levels in society from the local right through to the international. Consequently, it is important that these types of structures are empowered and given the support and recognition they need so as to continue with the valuable work they do. Given their composition and structure, truly representative youth organisations offer young people the opportunity to participate as active citizens, developing their skills as active and positive contributors to their community on

local, regional, national and European levels. Yet youth organisations and other such providers of NFE are not recognised enough for their role as providers nor are the skills and competences gained in this setting given the recognition they deserve. Recognition of any structure or mechanism needs to occur in a variety of settings for it to become valid, and the same is the case for non-formal education. Political, social and individual recognition are critical if non-formal education and its providers are to be given any real weight. It is thus the duty of public bodies to begin to raise awareness of the benefits of NFE, through engagement with youth organisations and other such structures.

Political recognition of the providers of NFE is necessary as a first step. Political structures at all levels in society need to recognise the importance of those providing and partaking in NFE in our knowledge-based society. Governments and international organisations should actively support research into the impact that NFE plays in the development of both the individual and society in general. Cementing this research, they should go a step further by providing financial support to youth organisations as a demonstration of their commitment. This would help ensure the sustainability and development of Youth Organisations.

Social recognition is an important element in the overall status and perception of NFE. It is important that institutions and individuals at all levels in society begin to change and adapt their perceptions of the value of NFE and of youth work. Society's attitude towards education needs to alter from one where formal education is valued over and above non-formal education to one where both forms of education are weighed equally, for the different attributes they offer, and for the varied skills and benefits they bring to young people. It is often the case that both formal and non-formal education complement each other, providing an abundance of skills and knowledge from every walk of life.

Many people regard education, in its formal context at least, as the essential first rung of the labour market ladder. However, this reality is somewhat selective in its nature, neglecting the fact that education does and should reach far beyond the needs of the labour market. It is

essential that education systems and peoples' perceptions broaden to encompass an understanding of education as based on a plethora of aspects.

Until this attitude changes, people will continue to over concentrate on formal qualifications to the neglect of non-formal skills. Therefore, the European Youth Forum strongly believes that public authorities and labour market stakeholders should engage with youth organisations to develop concrete ways to make the benefits of non-formal education more visible.

This could be done through creating spaces and processes which would bring together the different people involved and enable the information exchange and networking between them. Whereas research is already being carried out, concrete data and figures need to be produced and disseminated on the contribution of NFE to education and learning. In fact, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the World Bank have said separately that they are willing to conduct studies on the impact of non-formal education. Whilst it is not the objective of youth organisations to enhance young people's competitiveness in the labour market, it should be noted that youth organisations make a significant contribution in this regard. Therefore, the very valuable skills, competencies and attitudes that are gained during engagement in youth activities need to be championed more widely among employers.

At the European level, **the Council of Europe and the European Commission** have a special responsibility to take an active role and give more commitment to these processes. The European Youth Forum welcomes the Council's invitation to Member States to "develop a framework for recognition of qualifications, building on the achievements of the Bologna process and promoting similar action in the area of vocational training" (see final reference in end box) and supports such a framework, wishing that non-formal learning such as that achieved in youth organisations would also be taken into account.

However, the step would be even greater if it was extended to include NFE. If NFE was included in such a framework youth organizations and other providers of NFE, would receive the recognition they deserve. This

recognition would not entail substituting qualifications received in the formal process, but rather could act as a sister accompaniment. It is already foreseen that non-formal education learning outcomes should also be included as a full part of Europass. This will enhance its visibility and recognition.

In the field of youth work, the European Youth Forum (YFJ) is actively trying to maintain this 'recognition/non-formalisation' balance in its activities and with its members. Indeed, YFJ offers a good example of how this balance can be achieved. For example, YFJ is taking part in the development of a European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers, a self-assessment tool for those involved in work with young people, developed by the Council of Europe [see the article of Hans-Joachim Schild and Manfred von Hebel for more details about this portfolio]. This and other such self-assessment tools which aim to make the learner more aware of his or her own learning outcomes should be developed and promoted towards the labour market. NFE and FE are complementary and together serve to provide the individual with a large amount of knowledge in many spheres of life. Non-formal education then should not be regarded as a replacement for formal education, but rather as a mechanism through which the education not provided in the formal system can be attained. Indeed, participation in non-formal education schemes can be combined with the curricula of formal education. Indeed, the formal education system should be made more flexible to ensure this type of education is easily accessible to all. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case. NFE is not something that can

be learnt in a year; it is a lifetime process that gains its success by continuously building upon the abilities, capacities and experiences of the individual. The formal education system should therefore leave greater room for NFE throughout the entire educational cycle; not only by giving the still valuable possibility to spend a transition year occurring mid-way through the secondary school cycle. Facts, Facts, Facts can be learnt, learnt, learnt, but skills need to be honed, fine-tuned and developed on a regular basis. NFE should therefore be seen as an essential element in the development of the fully-rounded individual, and as one that is gathering more relevance the deeper we dive into our knowledge-based society.

The days of 'facts, facts, facts' no longer suffice in meeting the diverse needs of today's young people. Now more than ever, with the world becoming more global, with more young people crossing borders and travelling, bringing with them a barrage of cultural differences, the needs and expectations faced by the education system present an enormous challenge to adequately meet the demand for different ways of providing education. The European Youth Forum believes that youth organisations have long played their role in providing active opportunities for young people through the NFE methods used. Non-formal education, based on the concept of 'learning by doing', is a crucial part of young people's personal and professional development. Therefore, the time has come to recognise the benefits they help young people bring to their own self-development, knowledge and capabilities.

The European strategy on recognition of non-formal learning in the Youth Programme by R. Bergstein

in Coyote N° 11- May 2006

Imagine all the people...
30 young people coming from five different European countries, spending 10 days together in a youth exchange somewhere in Europe dealing with issues like environmental development and sustainability and what this means for being an active European citizen. Imagine what they learn during the preparation phase of the exchange, the exchange

programme and the follow-up. The learning is about...

- their cultural identity,
- knowledge of other cultures and specific subjects,
- organising things together,
- perception of others,
- dealing with conflicts while trying to understand each other or having different

concepts,

- a lot of small things concerning independence, democracy, living together in a group, expressing themselves, dealing with unforeseen situations
- a lot more!

Imagine all the people...

In Europe nearly 150 000 young people take part in activities of the YOUTH programme every year. Imagine the amount of “tons of learning”, if you could say that each young person learns a package of 50 kilos... And the question is who recognises this learning? How can young people present their “tons of learning”? How can they use it for their life? Do young people really realise what they have learned? To answer these questions, to make learning transparent and visible and to get more recognition for non-formal learning in Europe, at national and at local level, is the idea of Youthpass. Youthpass deals with the issue of recognition of non-formal learning in the YOUTH programme. Youthpass will be a variety of instruments to visualise what young people learn in YOUTH programme activities. Different tools will help young people to recognise their own learning process and to

make the learning outcome visible and usable when applying for a job, looking for a school placement... Sharing all the world... Getting recognition for activities in youth work is a challenge for youth workers and youth leaders all over Europe. The Youthpass development will foster the recognition of youth work at European level, influencing national youth policy developments and directly offering tools for an impact at local level. Without the large number of hours that youth workers and youth leaders in their professional and voluntary life invest, youth work at European level would never exist like it exists today. Youth workers and youth leaders at local, national and European level argue for, discuss about and develop European projects with young people. The outcome is a huge variety of creative, dynamic and highly professional projects in international contexts, here we are talking about some 10 000 projects in the YOUTH programme.

Getting recognition for this important effort that the youth work field makes at local, national, European and international level, is one aim of Youthpass. [...]

Bring more peace into non-formal education. Peace and violence in non-learning groups by S. Strenner

in Coyote N° 11- May 2006

Bring more peace into non-formal education. The aim of this article is to show that despite the qualitative opposition between peace and violence, the two often cannot be separated in practice. The other aim is to observe the different forms of violence that occur within non-formal education (NFE) based on that understanding. Though trainers in NFE are supposedly aware of peaceful and democratic educational approaches and principles and would like to see their courses and trainings as peaceful and non-violent as possible...the reality seems to be far from that. In my article I introduce the milestones of my learning paths and show how I amended my trainer and course organiser practice previously known as fully peaceful and democratic.

Psychologists say people learn most of their thinking, values and attitudes from their

ancestors. When we think about the lives of our relatives and add the theories of modern psychology, we can get to the conclusion, that if our grandparents were victims or witnesses (not to mention contributors) to the numerous genocides of the 20th Century, their children might have inherited some similar thinking, values and attitudes that made the war and terror possible.

It is also said, that in countries where democracy was established only in the last decades, societies have not yet been able to digest the holocaust or the communist regimes in order to heal or cure themselves. Experts say these societies have much to do to get rid of scapegoats or other false strategies for living. This made me think that maybe I myself, as a member of our society, have similar attitudes that I am not aware of at all. Probably I also have a lot to do personally.

Some theories

[...] Galtung says peace is not the lack of war. The lack of war is negative peace. The concept of peace or violence must cover all kinds of violence. War is a radical attack against human communities. Armistice is not equal to peace. There can be massive pain, wounds, and even dead people too. Something happened that is irreversible. Treatment may occur but the painful memories will not go away.

According to Galtung there are at least three other kinds of violence:

- Cultural violence: discrimination, threat, manipulation, debate
- Direct violence: abuse, mistreatment, taking one's freedom
- Structural violence: hierarchy, law, roles, procedures, bureaucracy

Galtung also says that conflict and violence must be separated. There is a clear distinction. Conflict is a possibility that can develop in any direction based on creativity. According to Kenneth Boulding, conflict is one of many different forms of competition for limited goals or resources (1962). When there is a conflict situation amongst different roles, people, groups or nations, they may feel tension, heat. There is no harm yet; only the tangible tension of misunderstandings, confusion or of limited resources, clashing interests and so on. Needs will bring responses to a conflict situation and the applied core values will shift the solution towards peace or violence.

Examples

Observing conflict-responses in my environment (how violent or peaceful they are), became my "hobby": I observed trainings, seminars, conferences, lectures, even discussions - sometimes as a victim, sometimes as an offender - and how the trainer's (leader's) interventions served the needs of participants or not. I gathered the following violent experiences amongst non-formal educational settings :

- Sending out invitations or calls for applications very late, so potential participants are not able to come or to make a good decision about their enrolment.
- Implementing trainings without enthusiasm: without fire and passion so that it becomes routine and our numbness decreases the enthusiasm of learners.
- Not understanding participants' questions and opinions.

- To decide too soon about the level and content of the training and the methods to be used. Then trainees' interests and real needs will hardly fit to the course.
- Gathering but not understanding participants' expectations. The trainers assume they understand participants properly.
- Not sleeping enough during long-term training courses.

It breaks down the capacity and awareness of trainers.

- Teaching something to participants when their knowledge in the subject is not checked. Some participants might be smarter and they think: this trainer thinks we are stupid!
- Cutting free-time with serious programme points, or slipping into the free time.
- Not knowing the background of the participants or their expectations.
- Using weak communication or misleading instructions so that trainees have different understandings of what the task is.
- There is no balance between action, thoughts and emotions, so the course is only talking.
- Not cooperating with co-trainers so that a visible conflict or rivalry develops and participants feel insecure.
- Waiting for participants who are late, or trainers are late.

Those who are present suffer and next time all the people will come even later.

- Asking a participant or a colleague to gather missing participants. Then people will feel as if they were in the kindergarten. The process loses its seriousness.
- And many more...

It might sound too harsh, but I call these cases violent, because they do not encourage full participation, they seize opportunities, they misuse power and limit the learning process. The longer the suffering, the bigger uncertainty, pain, lack of trust, humiliation, and oppression gets. Violence destroys groups, communities and individuals too. The list of violations and false interventions I guess, could be much longer.

Responses to violence

Suffering from any kind of violence, victims can choose from 3 strategies:

- a) fight (resistance) or b) flee, escape or c) submission.

Fortunately most of our participants are well

equipped with these “shields” so they protect themselves. Some examples of possible responses to violence in NFE:

- Silence
- Participants do not work but rather they just chat
- They laugh, chat, have a good time but apparently they do something different to what you expect
- There are side-discussions
- People’s attention is not focused, they fall apart
- Participants are bored, they are not there mentally
- They are late, they do not appear
- You have a gut feeling that something isn’t working

properly, you feel like swimming up the stream. Are these responses familiar to you? When participants resist the harm is less painful and participants feel a certain level of control, but the learning process is shallow and limited. Resisting takes away energy and attention from both sides. Working in resistance mode makes

the trainer tired. In my example my responses to the violence were fight (resistance) and flee, but they sucked my energy, creativity, and turned me into an irresponsible person criticising everything around me. For more about resistance you can read Mette Bram’s article in Coyote, Issue 3.

Power

We already know violence happens against the free will of its victims. And here comes the question: what is the element that makes it possible to bully participants into doing something they would not otherwise do? We cannot exercise compulsion without POWER. It gives authority over our participants. We use power, when we ask them to sit in a circle - and they do it. They respect us. Power is the capacity to give punishment or reward. It keeps people in a subordinate position, sometimes in fear regardless of whether they know it or not. It helps to make people do what we want them to do. Power is a sweet thing for the superior.

T-Kit N° 4: Intercultural Learning

ISBN-10: 92-871-5364-7

Concepts of Intercultural learning

Roles in Learning: learning is also about roles. As most children share the school as an early structured learning experience, the role-pair at hand is the one of teacher-student. For most people involved in non-formal education, however, it is obvious that learning can very effectively be set-up as a two-way process, where people learn from each other by interacting. In fact, we do learn constantly, but

many people do not conceive of themselves as learners and, at times unconsciously, prefer the role of a teacher. Creating the openness for mutual learning is one of the challenges everyone involved in non-formal education faces when starting to work with a new group of people - and, as a personal remark, I sometimes wish those involved in formal education would take up that challenge in the classroom as well.

T-Kit N° 6: Training Essentials

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Training , training aims and non-formal education

Youth organisations and youth projects are places for political, social and cultural initiative and involvement. They are also places for non-formal education and learning. When asked by the European Youth Forum to specify what young people learned through participation in organised youth work, practitioners in the youth field focused on personal and social development. In personal terms they mentioned

such effects as increased self-esteem, responsibility, creativity, tolerance and critical thinking, and in terms of social development the cultivation of active citizenship and participation, group and leadership skills, communication strategies and knowledge of social issues (1999, pp.24-25). If training aims to better equip youth workers and youth leaders for their work, then these are the factors that it needs to address. It needs to provide a space for personal and social

development, and to empower for political, social and cultural participation.

Informal and non-formal education

Putting the educational value of youth work on the political agenda has an influence on the aims and structure of training. In the current political debate, the term informal is increasingly replaced by non-formal when referring to the educational value of youth work. The terms are however not clearly defined, and often need to be understood in the context of usage. Formal education is consistently used to refer to the education system that runs from primary to tertiary institutions, the main actors being schools and the range of institutes of higher education. Non-formal and informal education, on a basic level, define themselves as something other than the formal sector, which all young people participate in to varying levels.

Non-formal education has emerged as a term since the 1970s with the aim of achieving a better recognition of education and learning taking place outside of schools, universities and evaluative systems. The adoption of the term stressed that new educational contexts needed to be recognised, and valued for their different contributions. This is the sense in which the term is used by the European Youth Forum, which defines non-formal education as organised and semi-organised educational activities operating outside the structure and routines of the formal education system.

Informal education has been defined in many ways, generally as education that happens outside the formal education system. Clearly this can take many forms, and you may see the term applied to describe a variety of activities. Some see it as learning that goes on in daily life; the multiple ways we learn to function and interact in our societies. In this sense of the term informal education describes socialisation, as we can see in the European Youth Forum's definition of it as the non-organised and incidental learning that goes on in daily life (ibid). This is by no means the only common usage of the term, and other definitions employ it to denote more active and engaged forms of learning. Some use it in relation to the 'learning projects' that we take up ourselves in our free time, be it hobbies or new skills. In this context, it is often applied to the learning that comes as a result of being involved in

youth and community work. Despite these divergent usages, informal education can be seen as a process where learning takes place (see reference for discussions of learning), and as activities which help people to learn (See Smith, Mark K. 2000). To avoid confusion, we will use non-formal education to describe the world of youth training, while acknowledging that there are still debates to be had on the terminology.

Non-formal education is usually defined against formal education, and this is an important connotation to consider. Many practitioners underline the potential of youth organisations or other institutions to provide alternative means of education, beyond the range and capabilities of schools. However those who emphasise the potential value of a complementary approach between educational sectors (see also 4.2.2) contest this. A complementary approach can involve non-formal education developing and augmenting subjects dealt with in schools, or emphasising a participative approach to learning. It can also involve replicating some of the features of the formal sector in the non-formal, with the aim of accrediting training or similar work. The current approach of the European institutions and the European Youth Forum is to set up quality standards and means of certification for non-formal education at European level, in particular for training. Yet recognising the value of non-formal education is only one side of the debate, as some people involved in youth work fear that youth work and training might lose some of its inherent characteristics in this process. Openness to all young people, voluntary involvement without the fear of assessment of personal achievements, flexibility in structure and planning, learning based upon participants' needs and interests, and the possibility of working at different speeds and in different ways may be diluted by the demands of structures and curricula.

Learning Styles

In the youth field, it is common to juxtapose formal and non-formal education (see 2.1.4). Formal education, be it school or university, tends to emphasise the intellectual and what is often called 'banking' approach to learning. The teacher is the 'sage on the stage', regarding the learner as an empty vessel to be filled with useful information, and not acknowledging that the vessels are already full

in different ways. As opposed to this, training, with the trainer as the 'guide by the side', encourages the learner as vessel to choose the liquid and to fill itself as it chooses. This dichotomy ignores a number of things; the development of pedagogical approaches in the formal sector that are used in the non-formal, the very diversity of the formal sector itself, and the increasing cross-fertilisation of types of education between both sectors. It also presumes that anything carried out under the name of non-formal education should be automatically valued. Remember, somebody in a campaign t-shirt and sandals can bore your head off too.

What does characterise non-formal education is that it is participant-centred, and that the participant is usually motivated to be there. The aim is to create a process where the individual can learn from themselves, from the group, and from the training. Given this participant-centredness, training involves an emphasis on personal development (see 2.1.2), and on learning in as many ways as possible. This is often described as the 4H approach; learning with head, hands, heart and health, and emphasises the interconnectedness of the intellectual, instrumental, emotional and holistic ways of learning. Even without reference to more specific theories, this shorthand description acts as a valuable checklist for any training, as it makes the point that learning is enhanced by continually engaging the different ways that we learn. The rationale of this checklist is that the more dimensions the training addresses, the deeper the level of learning that is engaged. It also suggests that we have to think about the way that we learn, consciously address these different ways of learning, and work on our relevant capabilities.

T-Kit N° 8: Social Inclusion

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If youth workers and youth organisations cannot reach out to and include young people with the fewest opportunities in their activities, where else will they benefit from the non-formal learning experiences these activities provide?

How else will the most marginalised young people be able to join other young people and

Evaluation in the context of organising an European youth training course

One of the challenges of European youth work in general and for the organisations involved in particular is to look very critically at the strengths of non-formal education, and to ascertain what alternative systems can be developed for the evaluation and assessment of learning outcomes. The approach implies that the tools of assessment (and evaluation) have to be developed with three distinct aspects in mind: content of the training programs, personal development of young people and evaluation of the educational process as such. Crucially, this will only work if the young people are involved in their assessment. They should be encouraged to reflect, describe, analyse and communicate what they experience during the activities in which they participate (Vink, 1999). Given the nature of youth training and the values it embodies, it is reasonable to suggest that assessment involves a certain degree of tolerating ambiguity. One should be prepared to cope with the fact that there will not be definite answers when faced with the challenge of even defining evaluation in the context of youth training activities. The only definite statement we can make is that the approach and methods used in the profit sector are unsuitable for direct use in the assessment and evaluation of youth activities. The measurable financial or business objectives of this sector are replaced in the youth sector with goals and objectives that often possess a degree of intangibility, and as such can be difficult to evaluate and, if necessary, measure. In relation to this, the fact that the working methods and approaches of non-formal education are often better researched and described than the learning elements and outcomes means that defining the aims, criteria and mechanisms of evaluation in youth training activities becomes a challenging task.

adults in the projects that are open to them in our societies? And outside of the formal structures that do not always serve them the best, where will the most vulnerable young people find the encouragement and support to develop their self-esteem and confidence? Without such broader inclusion where will the most isolated young people develop the necessary skills and self-belief to take up the

challenge of representing others? And what possible future will Europe be missing out on without such inclusion?

How then do youth workers and youth organisations go about being inclusive? This T-Kit aims to provide both conceptual and practical tools and resources from which to begin to explore and approach this question. Excluded young people are hard to reach and the more excluded they are the harder it is. Making contact with young people is not enough; we need to engage and work with them. The problem is confounded by the fact that many marginalised young people express suspicion, even hostility, towards the involvement of professionals in their lives. This is why youth work is so important. Its often voluntary and community-based nature means that youth workers and youth organisations have a better chance than most to make contact and build trusting relationships with young people on the margins of society (see 6.3 : Building trust). So what are the benefits to be gained when we as youth workers build on this vocational advantage and work as inclusively as we can?

In all this it is vital that youth workers know their limitations. Some of the barriers to young people's inclusion are deep-rooted, long lasting and structural in society. Youth workers cannot counter their effects at a stroke, even with good intentions and hard work. Goals have to be realistic and achievable (see the section on SMART objectives in T-Kit 3 on Project Management). Youth projects obviously cannot single-handedly eradicate poverty, unemployment, drug use, racism and xenophobia, educational underachievement, homelessness, abuse and neglect, youth crime or any of the other problems linked with young people's social exclusion. But they can work with young people in informal settings, broadening their opportunities, providing new experiences and challenges, showing their faith in young people and bringing out of them what is best, as described in 5 : Non-formal education as a tool for the inclusion of all.

[...] If you want to have young people with fewer opportunities in your youth work activities, one thing is clear and simple: you have to offer them something they find attractive. Often, they feel attracted to active workshops and events that give them a kick and

can be seen as an extension of their normal pastimes. It is up to the youth worker to build in non-formal educational experiences within a seemingly pure fun activity. And this hidden agenda does not even have to be explicit to the participants. When setting up educational experiences the youth workers want to expand the worlds and skills of the young people. However, as mentioned with the three Cs above (challenge, capacity and connection), the activity should indeed take youth out of their usual habits into trying or learning something new. However, if we set expectations too high, they will surely withdraw.

[...] Schools can supply a youth worker with basic information about the neighbourhood, from the number of young persons at the school to the cultural structure, the number of school leavers and the level of education. But you might also consider co-operating with teachers or even employers when setting up non-formal education programmes. An additional advantage of this is that it could be possible to use equipment and space available in the school. A disadvantage, however, might be that the young people are already averse to school and unwilling to spend more time there, so careful preparation and deliberation is necessary.

[...] Human beings never stop learning and developing. We all learn different things in different moments and different spheres of our lives. We learn a lot during our schooling, but we should not neglect all the learning opportunities outside of this academic learning environment. All learning experiences in life contribute to people's personal growth and lead to a better understanding of the environment in which they live, which in turn empowers people to fully participate in society.

The formal education system (schools, universities, vocational training) aims at providing young people a basic knowledge to be used for their social integration into society. Unfortunately in many cases, the formal education system fails to provide all young people with their learning needs due to various reasons. Therefore, other sources of personal development should be available.

Non-formal education may be one of them, especially - but not solely - for young people with fewer opportunities. This chapter will

explore the different ways of learning, compare them and consider why and how non-formal education could be a “second chance” for our target group.

In Europe, most of the people have gone through some form of schooling in their lives. This formal school education is commonly based on a “vertical” relationship between the pupil / student and the teacher: the holder of the knowledge (the teacher) and the receiver (the learner). The teacher mostly delivers knowledge to the student in the form of courses and curricula. At the end of the learning pathway a written document certifies the knowledge acquired by the learner according to official criteria. These certificates and diplomas are often necessary as keys to open doors into the labour market and society. Academic diplomas mostly refer to theoretical knowledge.

Vocational training brings more practical contents in addition to general knowledge. It gives the learner a practical qualification that can be used directly in the labour market. Usually, traineeships are part of vocational training. The trainees learn a trade at the lowest beginner level within the working reality with the support of a mentor. At the end of the learning process there is also a certification. Vocational training is often shorter than formal studies and targets a quick acquisition of operational working skills. The relationship between the teacher and the learner still remains vertical, with the teacher passing down skills to the learner.

Non-formal education, on the contrary, can be summarized as “learning by doing”. The learning methodology lies in the interaction between the learners and the concrete situations they are experiencing. There are usually no teachers or lecturers providing the knowledge ex-cathedra, but the learners and facilitators construct the knowledge and skills together, in a horizontal relationship. The educator or facilitator may be more or less active in the setting up of learning experiences for the benefit of the learner. This is what happens in youth work. It is possible to maximise non-formal education benefits for young people through the use of different methodologies such as peer education, project work, mobility projects, and more. The learners are at the centre of their own learning process

and the youth workers support them in it. Unfortunately, at present there is not much certification of the competencies acquired by non-formal learners yet.

[...] Even though formal education institutions in Europe have made efforts to improve the balance between theory and practice at school since the second half of the twentieth century, the differences outlined above still remain largely intact. Some initiatives were taken to tailor the ways of teaching to the learner’s needs and expectations, like Philippe Meirieu’s concept of “differentiated learning approaches”, but they remain limited. Hence, many young people leave the formal education system without having finished their studies or having acquired a qualification. Young people who have left school early or who are in precarious situations in society could benefit from non-formal education as a second chance that could have a strong impact in their lives. This educational approach needs to be thought through, prepared and implemented with the active participation of the young people themselves. Moreover, its use must be coherent within the young people’s lives; their prior history has to be taken into account, and afterwards the results should lead to a further step on their ways to social inclusion.

Non-formal education could empower young people with fewer opportunities to set-up their own projects, step by step (as we will see in 6.2 : Step-by-step approach), where they are at the centre of educational activity, feel concerned, have personal interests, find strong motivation, get self-confidence and as a result develop their capacities and skills by doing. However, non-formal education only works if correctly implemented and monitored. It does not happen overnight but requires time to get to know each other, to build up a trust-based relationship (see 6.3 : Building trust), using tailor-made methods. It might even be useful to network with people who know or have worked with the young person before (see 4.1 : Young people in their communities and 4.2 : Setting up partnerships).

Another interesting aspect of the use of non-formal education with the target group is that the beneficiaries may be multipliers afterwards, becoming “more experienced peers” towards their friends, and hence motivate and support them in a horizontal way.

This is the so-called peer education, which values young people sharing their experiences and providing support to others in similar experiences (see 7.1 : Peer education).

Non-formal education could be a tool for the inclusion of all, especially those who did not find their luck in the formal education system. But youth workers or social workers should be aware that their action is to be implemented as a stage of a holistic pathway and should not therefore be an objective in itself. It also supposes that the beneficiaries have their basic needs fulfilled. It is difficult to start working with young people on their personal development if at the same time they do not have a roof over their head or anything to eat.

Tailor-make your approach to your target group using the step-by-step approach (see 6.2 : Step-by-step approach) and plan concrete and positive results (even very small) at every step, in order to generate a dynamic of motivation. A feeling of achievement also stimulates self-confidence and self-esteem. When you mix all these ingredients and start your intervention at the right moment of the young people pathways, it will then become a strong educational tool for the young person's personal development. This alternative education may be a real second chance for young people with fewer opportunities to find their way back into society.