

Budapest 2003 ERYICA Seminar **Working paper from CIDJ - Belgium**

I. Description of youth information system in French-speaking Belgium

As you know, Belgium is a federal country and the youth information policy is different following you are Flemish, French or German speaking. The information I give you now are valid only for French speaking part.

What's an information center in French-speaking Belgium ?

To be recognized by the State as an information centre (and receive subvention), an organization has to pass a validation process. There are three categories of information centres. The higher you are, the more you receive money. The differences between the categories are on quantitative (for instance quantity of opening time) and qualitative aspects (for instance, existence or not of collaborations with local partners).

In two words, to be an information centre, you've to (minimal requirements):

- Be able to answer to the immediate questions of young people
- To promote the consciousness of social, cultural, economical and political elements that exist in the day-to-day life of the young people
- Offer free and anonymous access to the information
- Be opened at least 46 weeks a year, 15 hours and 3 days a week

You also have to be a non profit organization. A youth info centre receives from government (French – speaking authorities) money to pay one person and also from € 10.000 to 20.000 to pay infrastructures, activities,... Hopefully, most of the centres receive also money from local governments, municipalities,... There are centres with only one employee, and others with ten.

How is it organized ?

There are more or less 20 information centres in French speaking part of Belgium (5 in Brussels and 15 in Wallonia). All of them are independent from each other, but there are 3 federations that coordinate some parts of their works. Those federations are: Fédération Infor-Jeunes Wallonie-Bruxelles, CIDJ and SIEP (the SIEP affiliated centres are specialized on questions about studies).

For two years now, the federations try to work together to increase cooperation between them and cooperation between all the information centres.

II. Short description of one project in which I've been involved

Nature and objective of the project, financing

The objective was to create an exhibition and a pedagogic guide book about "the way the teenagers build their identity", and to do it with a group of teenagers.

The project was mainly financed by Brussels regional French speaking authorities (Commission communautaire française – CoCoF). It also used resources from our main subvention from the “Communauté française” federative authority.

Method and result

Collaboration was established with a school in Brussels. During weeks (6 months from December 2001 to may 2002), CIDJ workers passed time with teenagers in their classes. Those teenagers were around 14 years old. There were from very different cultural origins : North Africa, Turkey, East Europe and, of course, Belgium.

Specific animations were leaded with those teenagers about “where is my name from ?”, “what are my familial roots ?”, “to which groups do I belong ?”, “do I feel some internal conflict about my identity ?”, ... It was explain to them that the result of their works will be used for an exhibition and for a guide book. The teenagers took also all the pictures of the exhibition and some of their texts became direct content avec the exhibition.

The exhibition was showed in a public library, a cultural centre and in different information centres in Brussels and outside. Older young people were trained by CIDJ team to be able to show and explain the exhibition to visitors. The visitors were adults but also school classes.

Difficulties, positive points

The main difficulty in such a project with a lot of participation by young people is the need of time. Indeed, that takes a lot of time to win the confidence of the young participants, to explain the initial project to them, to negotiate changes with them, ...

The most positive point in an “emotional” point of view is the proud of the young participants when the saw the final result, comments of the visitors, articles in newspapers,... Another thing that’s clear is that, anyway, it would have been impossible to create information tools about such subjects without working directly with young people.

III. Specific official policies to increase to amount of public that is touched by centres actions.

The French-speaking government give money to information centres that implement specific actions to increase quantity or diversity of public touched.

Those specific actions must take place in long term (that’s not ponctual). There a 2 different dispositions: “decentralization” and “partnership process”.

The “partnership process” will most of time be linked with projects

	« decentralization »	« partnership process »
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<p>First aim</p>	<p>To increase the quantity of territory that is covered (thus, there is also increasing of amount of young people touched)</p>	<p>To increase the diversity of the public who is touched in the “natural” and already covered territory of the centre.</p> <p>That needs specific strategies and methods that are implemented with the help of local partners.</p>
<p>Is there a convention with a partner (non-profit organization, public service,...) ?</p>	<p>Optional.</p>	<p>Yes. You’ve to.</p>
<p>Obligations of the center that organizes the action</p>	<p>During opening hours, in the decentralized office, there must be a person who is specialized and trained in youth info to work with the young people who are come.</p> <p>This person must be a member of the youth info centre’s team.</p> <p>The decentralized office must be big enough, visible, easy to access,...</p>	<p>It must be a partnership convention signed between the info center and the other partners.</p> <p>This convention must stipulate the commitments from each partner, the evaluation process,...</p> <p>All the partners (they can be two or more) have to bring something concrete and be active in the partnership (not just only a signature and that’s all...).</p>
<p>Examples</p>	<p>Info point installed in a youth club, a library or in a place that is the property of local municipality, and s.o.</p> <p>It must be in a significant geographic distance from the info centres in itself of course.</p>	<p>A partnership with a theatre. The theatre help young people to create some plays that are showed in schools. After and related to the play, debates are organized. Of course, the plays must talk about specific subject (racism, money, difficulty to find a job, HIV transmission,...)</p> <p>Other example: a partnership with a youth club where there are a lot of young people with “difficulties” and who don’t go to the info centre by themselves. The members of the youth club and the info centre can create an exhibition, other cultural events,...</p> <p>There are of course a lot of partnership possibilities with a lot of organizations.</p>