



EUROPEAN SEMINAR

ON

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN YOUTH INFORMATION

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WORKING-PAPERS

PREPARED BY THE PARTICIPANTS

Document A

sent to all participants before the seminar

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- > paper (Scotland) prepared by Claire Kane
- > paper (Wales) prepared by Lyjanka Drobnik

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BELGIUM (Flemish Community)

Youth participation in youth information work in Flanders

Paper prepared by Christine VANMEERT

In Flanders there are several Youth Information Points (JIPs). These JIPs are co-ordinated by Delta. Delta is subsidised by the Flemish Government.

A JIP is meant for young people between 12 and 26 years old.

The topics about which information is given are related to the interests of the youngsters and are therefore very diverse (relations, sexuality, drugs, sports, youth work, rights and obligations, violence, minorities, etc.).

For the JIP-workers there is a two-day course where they get the information about how to run a JIP.

There are a few quality standards for getting the label JIP. These are based on the European Youth Information Charter.

Over the past few months several organisations which are involved with Youth Information have created a Flemish Charter of Youth Information. This charter has been given to the Flemish Government (Youth Service). They have prepared a policy document (but it has not been adopted yet). The accent in this document is on training for youth information workers, on youth participation, on promoting the information organisations amongst the youngsters, and on prevention against harmful information.

So, in the near future, information and participation will get a whole new place in the policy of the Flemish Government.

I work in a Youth Advice Centre (JAC), that also has the label of a JIP. There are JACs in the whole Flemish area and they are pretty much comparable with each other.

And that certainly stands for the training of Youth Advisors. This is a good working project, and that has been proved by the fact that it exists for more than 10 years. This year there will be a training for youth advisors in our 4 JACs (Mol, Turnhout, Herentals, Geel).

There is extra attention for participation in this method.

Giving feedback and pointing out problems are very important roles of a youth advisor.

They keep our JAC alert for all the things that happen amongst youngsters. They get the opportunity to tell us what they think of our reception room, the practice of our JAC, the employers

As a JAC we find the principal of "emancipatory working" very important. Young people get the opportunity to make their own choices. We will support them, but they themselves decide what they want, when they want it, how much The participation from them is the most important part.

Because of our reception (in the form of a shop; walk in and walk out) we also have direct contact with the youth. Therefore they can give us feedback about the design of the reception, about the information they can find (or not find)

We have (with our 4 JACs) a Working Group on Information. Here we discuss the newest information materials that are available, we screen new brochures etc., to obtain an information centre as high quality and up-to-date as possible. We try to connect the themes and the materials as close as can be with the interests and needs of the youngsters. Maybe it's an interesting idea to enlarge the participation of the youth itself in this working group, to involve them in this working group.

Maybe "Thebat" is a good participation method?

In 2000 there was an idea from JAC Turnhout to start with a local youth council. (The experiment has been written, but never carried out for the lack of time).

The youth council would not be the place for individual problems or questions, but for participation in the working of the JAC. The participation would be advising, and being attentive to bottlenecks. This way the young people are getting the opportunity to participate in the things (information, advice, counselling) that a JAC offers. They themselves know best what goes on amongst the young people.

(The youth advisors have also given their opinion about this youth council and very much approved of it).

The last few years chatting is a very popular means of communication. In JAC Mol and Geel we recently started with a chat-box. It's just an experiment. Youngsters can chat at any time, but during a few hours, one day a week, there's also a JAC-worker to chat with. We want to accomplish that youth will find their way to the JAC more easily, and that they (for them, in a more confident way) can give feedback about the JAC (the way it works, the information materials ...).

This method has only just started. I can't give any results or evaluation. But I hope that there will be other youth workers at the seminar who have experience with this sort of communication, so they could give me some tips, hints.

Christine Vanmeert
JAC Mol
5 September 2003.

BELGIUM (French Community)

Paper prepared by Alain MARON, CIDJ

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 according to whether you are Flemish-, French- or German-speaking. The information I give in this paper is valid only for the French-speaking part of the country.

What is an information centre in French-speaking Belgium?

To be recognised by the State as an information centre (and receive financial support), an organisation has to pass a validation process. There are three categories of information centres. The higher your category, the more money your organisation receives. The differences between the categories are quantitative (for instance, number of hours open to the public) and qualitative aspects (for instance, existence or not of collaboration with local partners).

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

- To be able to answer to the immediate questions of young people
- To promote awareness of social, cultural, economical and political elements that exist in the day-to-day lives of young people
- To offer free and anonymous access to the information
- To be open at least 46 weeks a year, 15 hours and 3 days a week

You also have to have the legal status of a non-profit organisation. 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 infrastructure, activities ... Hopefully, most of the centres receive also money from local government, municipalities ... There are centres with only one employee, and others with ten.

How is it organised ?

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 co-ordinate some parts of their works. Those federations are: Fédération Infor-Jeunes Wallonie-Bruxelles, CIDJ and SIEP (the SIEP affiliated centres are specialised in questions about studies).

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

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

Nature and objective of the project, financing

The objective was to create an exhibition and a pedagogic guide-book about “the way 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 grant from the “Communauté française” government.

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 activities were organised with those teenagers about “where is my name from?”, “what are my family roots?”, “to which groups do I belong?”, “do I feel some internal conflict about my identity?” ... It was explained to them that the result of their work would be used for an exhibition and for a guide-book. The teenagers took also all the pictures for the exhibition and some of their texts became part of the content in the exhibition.

The exhibition was shown 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 for time. Indeed, that it 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 was the pride of the young participants when they saw the final result, the comments of the visitors, articles in newspapers ... Another thing that is 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 the public reached by the centres' actions

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

Those specific actions must take place on a long-term basis (in other words, not single short-term actions). There are 2 different possibilities: “decentralisation” and “partnership process”.

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

	« decentralisation »	« partnership process »
First aim	To increase the quantity of territory that is covered (thus, there is also an increase in the number of young people reached)	To increase the diversity of the public which is reached in the “natural” and already covered territory of the centre. That needs specific strategies and methods that are implemented with the help of local partners.
Is there a convention with a partner (non-profit organisation, public service,...) ?	Optional.	Yes. You have to.
Obligations of the centre that organises the action	During opening hours, in the decentralised office, there must be a person who is specialised and trained in youth info to work with the young people who come. This person must be a member of the youth info centre’s team. The decentralised office must be big enough, visible, easy to access ...	It must be a partnership convention signed between the info centre and the other partners. This convention must stipulate the commitments from each partner, the evaluation process,... All the partners (they can be two or more) have to bring something concrete and be active in the partnership (not just a signature and that’s all ...).
Examples	Info point installed in a youth club, a library or in a place that is the property of local municipality, etc. It must be a significant geographic distance from the info centre itself, of course.	A partnership with a theatre. The theatre helps young people to create some plays that are showed in schools. After and related to the play, debates are organised. Of course, the plays must talk about specific subject (racism, money, difficulty to find a job, HIV transmission ...) 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 ... There are of course a lot of partnership possibilities with different organisations.

BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA

Youth Information System and Projects

**Paper prepared by Merima ZUPCEVIC,
Co-ordinator for Administration, Youth Information Agency (OIA)**

Youth information system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is practically non-existent. There is no national policy or network that deals specifically with this topic. There is also no governmental practice on youth information. This leaves all the information flow to the non-governmental youth organisations, which try hard to minimise the consequences of lack of governmental support.

All the information regarding youth, youth NGOs and other youth-related issues is disseminated through mailing lists, personal contacts, campaigns etc. usually initiated by youth NGOs. Two problems can be pointed out as alarming and most damaging to a sustainable information flow:

- lack of standards in youth information flow;
- lack of trained information workers.

The focal point of this loose system is OIA – Omladinska Informativna Agencija (YIA – Youth Information Agency). It is the first information-resource association and think-tank at the national level for the youth policy. OIA stimulates and advocates the process of youth policy development in BiH, strengthens and supports mechanisms for its development and creates a positive environment for the rise and implementation of such a policy. Our main target groups are:

- the government (over 50 governmental bodies);
- youth NGOs (around 200);
- international community in BiH (all institutions important for youth);
- youth in general.

Beside the development and public advocacy of youth policies, a capacity-building programme, public relations and youth fund, the youth info-service is one of our main programmes. It is comprised of:

1. data bases on youth

* *data base of young Bosnians living abroad* (BiH Youth Diaspora) – having for its purpose to integrate this part of the population into main-stream events regarding youth

* *data base of youth sector in BiH* – one of OIA's Special Reports on Development of Youth Policy – No. 3 dealt with this issue. It was a summary of a survey project entitled "The Youth Sector in BiH: Assessment of Needs". The basic aim of the initiative to conduct the survey-evaluation of BiH youth sector needs was to look into the current situation, needs, capacities, and interactions between the youth NGOs themselves as well as with the governmental sector, in order to initiate changes in the state policy so that it would meet real needs.

2. E-news – regular weekly news on BiH youth activities (to be elaborated later)

3. NGO library and info-desk

4. Web site – our web site www.mladi.info gives information regarding the activities of OIA, youth policy development process, important documents, etc.

5. Youth press-clipping service – since June 2002 OIA collects and analyses the three most influential daily papers. We find articles on the relationship with youth-authorities and other youth issues

6. **Public relations** – we have regular contacts with over 50 media houses around the country through which we try to initiate youth participation in the society as well as the development of youth policy
7. **Info-network** – this is still an idea – to form info-desks in different towns inside a youth organisation and helped by the authorities to let young people learn more about youth issues.

Beside the Info-service, OIA implements a programme called Youth Policy at the Local Level. One of its key issues is youth information, with a view to educating municipality officers and local NGOs to establish youth information system at the local level.

Our main source of finances is Soros Foundation – Open Society Fund BiH.

This summer, OIA participated in the seminar “Information and Counselling” held in Bled, Slovenia (June 9-12) organised by MISSS Slovenia and ERYICA. This was our first step toward integrating our organisation into European youth information system and exchanging experiences with other organisations active in this field.

Short description of a project I have been involved in:

A major youth information project in which I have been (and still am) involved is OIA's weekly E-news. We started this project at the beginning of 2002 and have since then issued over 60 weekly newsletters. In 60 numbers, we published 857 news items, of which 116 promoted our activities (making 13,5% of all news items). First E-news were sent out to 400 e-mail addresses and now we have over 3,700 subscribers. Main objective of the project is informing our target groups about the latest activities in the youth field. This means we promote activities of other youth NGOs, different youth events (seminars, conferences, festivals, etc.), job vacancies and similar issues.

News is gathered in different ways. The backbone of the news is our regional co-ordinators' network. We have five regional co-ordinators who cover the entire country, gather, and send to the central office in Sarajevo information from their regions. The team in Sarajevo (Executive director – who is the editor of E-news; PR persons and I) gathers information from Sarajevo and from other mailing lists, which show interest in further dissemination of their news. All these sources make out approximately 20-30 news items per issue.

From the beginning, this project has encountered nothing but positive reactions. All subscribers comment on the quality and usefulness of our news. It has a real impact on the youth community of BiH. The only difficulties encountered so far were mostly connected to the technical part of preparation – Internet connection problems, viruses and the like.

My job is to gather information from all sources, adjust them in length, form and regarding their importance, make the final visual appearance, submit them for approval, and then send them. I also take care of the subscribers' list.

Short description of another youth information project I know of:

Regarding other youth NGOs active in youth information work, there is Helsinki Citizen's Assembly (hCa). hCa is an international network of the civic initiatives, movements, social and political groups in East and West, which work on democratic integration of Europe. The main goal of the hCa work is to articulate and promote the view, interests and the political vision of the citizen's society in the process of European integration and concerning the problems that Europe is facing. hCa in BiH has recently been renamed as Youth Network in BiH.

So far sixteen editions of "TNT", the youth magazine, have distributed by the youth organisations / network members, as well as contacts and youth initiatives in area of the former Yugoslavia, with the basic goal that youth in the region get knowledge about situation in our country and information about all topics which concern them. Since last year, TNT magazine is officially included in "The Union of Balkan Magazines"- one of the joint projects within the Citizen's Pact for the Southeast Europe.

Another youth information project is the Youth Network Newsletter. They disseminate it monthly and cover topics relating to the activities of their organisations and other youth events. These are mostly reports from various youth NGOs in the previous month.



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ESTONIA

Youth information system, and some projects

Paper prepared by Marje REIMUND

1. Describe briefly the youth information system in your country

The youth information system in Estonia has been developed since 1998. The Youth Work Act which entered into force in 1999 defines the field of youth work and guarantees the availability of up-to-date and necessary information for young people and youth workers with help of modern possibilities. There are 24 youth information and counselling centres in Estonia. 14 of them are at regional level and the Ministry of Education is responsible for the provision of service to young people. Most of centres are managed by non – governmental organisations. The objective of youth information and counselling centre is to provide information to young people and to help them to make decisions about their future, including study, jobs and careers.

In the centres there is information about possibilities for leisure activities, continuing education, information on career planning, counselling information related to psychological and special needs, i.e. where one can get help.

For the target group, various forms of electronic information are available: web-sites, information portals, information lists. E.g. career planning database pathfinder web-site: <http://www.rajaleidja.ee/pathfinder/>

Information is also available on paper: leaflets, newspapers, collections, and posters. Ministry of Education just recently published a booklet for schools about the vocational and higher educational institutions in 2003.

Direct dissemination of information: information fairs, information days, seminars, and lectures. E.g. there is annual youth information fair named “Teeviit” with three days of activities and presentations of various institutions and activities which are attended by thousands of young people. See more <http://www.teeviit.ee/en/>

The support for centres provided by the Ministry of Education has so far been only basic and thus, the support by county governments and local authorities is welcome. Adding sums applied for in various projects one can say that initiators of centres are able to find funds, which equal the amount allocated through the budget.

The target groups for information, guidance and counselling services are:

- Young people (according to law 7- 26 years old)
More particularly those at the end of basic or upper secondary school (grades 9 & 12)
- Practitioners – youth workers, teachers, information specialists and guidance counsellors
- Parents

Some active steps are taken to ensure that access to services is possible for target group.

- To develop and promote “ drop- in “ service that do not require appointments
- To visit schools in the area and provide guidance or tests and follow-up interviews to the classes
- Active steps are taken to promote career guidance and counselling in different media
- Promote telephone help-line

There is co-operation with youth advice centres, labour market, entrepreneurs, comprehensive and vocational schools and universities throughout Estonia.

2. Describe one (or more) projects in which you have been involved and which enabled young people to participate in youth information work

Time: October to December 2002.

Name: From Secondary School to University

Target group: young people in schools in the county of Rapla (age 17 – 18)

Aim: The idea was to collect information about the changes that the transition would bring and to discuss future educational opportunities.

As well this was the right moment to know all about the exams that would soon be selected by last year's students. Estonian educational life is changing very fast, and disorder in the field of exams is frequent.

Content: A first meeting was organised to give teamwork skills to the participants. There were 70 participants from schools in the Rapla area. We formed small groups for workshops to find out more information about exams and study opportunities from Estonian career planning database Rajaleidja (Pathfinder) and from other places using the Internet.

The next discussion was about private and public universities. There were two rectors from different types universities to meet the students.

Then was a discussion about social support for students.

The last meeting was for young men to meet and discuss with conscripts from Estonian army.

Our plan was that a lot of the work would be done by teams of girls (making contact with speakers, informing the pupils in the schools).

The project was financed by special support from a fund, which this group prepared themselves. An information consultant took part as expert.

Difficulties: There is no time for students to absorb all information in the classroom, in school-time. There is no place and time in Estonian education curriculum where and when to give information which is audible and visible for the students.

Result of project:

- A group of young people found the motivation to give life to the idea of informing their peers in the Rapla area. They got valuable experience for life.
- There were ~70 students who got skills in searching for information.
- There were ~300 information lists for schools throughout Rapla county.

FINLAND

**Paper prepared jointly by Sari JUNTUNEN, Päivi LAUTANIEMI,
and Mira-Maria NYRONEN**

1. THE FINNISH YOUTH INFORMATION AND COUNSELLING network is active

[The Finnish Youth Information network](#) has 25 youth information services, which are located in different parts of the country and launched in different ways depending on the local needs of young people. There are "traditional" Youth Information Centres as well as youth information services mainly existing on the Internet.

Most Youth Information and Counselling Centres concentrate on providing information and counselling in response to the questions raised by their users; only a few also provide special counselling services. The areas of information and counselling available are very similar in all the centres, and they try to cover the entire field, which concern the everyday life of young people. Some Youth Information Centres also provide, in accordance with their resources, some additional counselling services in such fields as housing, employment, mobility etc. The focus of the information is always related to the needs of local young people.

The users of the centres are usually between 13 and 25 years of age, but parents, teachers, students, youth workers, etc. also make use of the services of the centres. In many places school classes arrange a visit to the local centre as a means of making young people familiar with the centre and its services. The information is provided free of charge. The opening hours that centres are open vary from one centre to another, according to their resources and the needs of local people.

[The Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi](#) has had national co-ordination of youth information from 1987 to 1997. Since 1998 Finnish Youth Information and Counselling Centres have actively started to co-operate and organise a national co-ordination by themselves. Co-operation is mostly focused on the training of youth information and counselling workers. [The Ministry of Education](#) gives financial support to Allianssi for its work representing the field of youth information in European co-operation (ERYICA) and for the development of electronic information services. Local Youth Information Centres and Services in Finland are financed by the municipal youth work. Youth Information Centres and Services accept the European Youth Information Charter, the professional principles adopted by the members of [the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency \(ERYICA\)](#).

Training of Youth Information Professionals in Finland

There are three Polytechnic schools in six cities of Finland, where it is possible to become a youth worker. In Polytechnics a student may choose training modules like Interaction and Communication, Prevention of Exclusion or Digital Literacy and some of them offer courses in youth information. There also exists the possibility of youth information distance-learning material on the Internet. After participating in such a training, a student has basic skills to work as a youth information worker guided by a professional. Because there is no professional training for youth information and counselling work, further education and training is needed and is organised by the network of Youth Information Centres in Finland.

During recent years Youth Information Centres have actively been organising national Youth Information conferences in co-operation with the Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) and National Youth Council / Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi. The themes of these conferences have been current youth information affairs such as specific information areas, methods and tools of youth information work, young people participating in youth information work, counselling, etc.

Youth information and counselling centres are also supporting newcomers by tutoring, monitoring or even coaching. Local Youth Information Centres are responsible to guide new workers in the youth information work.

There is a need for organised training and therefore Finnish youth information workers have been active in ERYICA and have participated in developing its training work to develop a national minimum basic training course (MBTC) on youth information. The MBTC package was ready at the beginning of 2002. The Finnish Youth Information ERYICA network had first MBTC training course in September 2002 in Helsinki.

2. How young people have participated in youth information work in Youth Information Centre Kompassi

- Finnish and foreign meetings

One au-pair girl who was in Helsinki organised the meetings in Kompassi in the evenings, after our opening hours. There were young people who had come from foreign counties and then those who live in Helsinki. They met each other in Kompassi and organised activities by themselves. It lasted about six months.

- Youth Initiative project

A few years ago we have had a Youth Initiative project. A Youth Initiative is a project created and run by a group of young people (10 people). The group of young people made a guidebook (Helpinki) for young people in Helsinki. School-teachers found it to be a good teaching material for the lessons concerning career guidance, etc. Young people of different age groups planned and wrote the content and made the graphical design of the Helpinki guide, supported by Youth Information Centre Kompassi (Helsinki City Youth Department) in 1998-1999.

- Trainees from comprehensive schools

We have had trainees from the comprehensive schools, 15 years old young people. Their traineeship lasts usually two weeks. After training they participated to our activities and brought also their friends along. They have planned some events for the Youth Information Centre. We have had only good experiences from these traineeships and we'll continue them.

- A peer counselling and information course

This year we have got money (20,000 Euros) from E.U. Youth Programme / Action 5: Support Measures to organise a peer counselling and information course for young people. We are just beginning this project this autumn and winter.

- The European Voluntary Service (EVS) programme

We have been the sending part for two young people and hosting part for three young people in the European Voluntary Service (EVS) programme. Those young people that we have sent as EVS have written a diary for our web-site.

City of Oulu / Youth Information Neppi Project: One of the main purposes of the Neppi project is youth participation, and there will be groups of young people participating and influencing the content of the information at the start of 2004, maybe also peer to peer information. We are looking for methods and tools to create a new model of youth participation in youth information work. We don't have a lot of experience about youth participation in youth information work.

City of Espoo / Leppävaara Project

The goal of this project is to get young people to participate in youth information work. There are three youth houses involved in this project. We decided to put the idea into practice by naming one youth worker from each youth house, who will be involved with us, and will answer for this project in his / her youth house.

We also decided to define the target group so that only young people who use the youth house will be involved in this project. We try to find 3-4 young persons from each youth house, who first define what kind of information is needed in their youth house. After they have done the questioning, they start to collect information. We thought that it's better if they collect information at first only on a few subjects. Then they don't have too much work. I have meetings with them regularly.

At first I will be actively involved, so that we get the project going, but later the responsibility is more and more with the youth workers at the youth houses. I am still their contact-person, and I will have the responsibility to respond to all the questions which are raised.

We have three important goals that we want to achieve with this project:

1. Young people of the target group learn how to search for information independently.
2. To develop a common benefit for the youth houses.
3. Young people will act as our "bush telegraph".

The experiment lasts five months (from August to December 2003). After that we will make a report. In the report we'll evaluate how the project started, to what extent the youth workers and the young people got involved in the project, and what other experiences they had. After that we will discuss if the project will continue, and if it does, how will it continue. There's maybe a possibility that the other youth houses will get involved.

3. How young people have participated in youth information work in Finland?

At the local level, there are several examples of how young people have participated in some part of the youth information and counselling work. Such participation has experimented as a project method, but it is not generalised throughout Finland yet. Nearly all the youth information centres are interested in developing the participation of young people but the difficult part is how to get young people involved and motivated.

1) In Kokkola, there have been three projects where young people have been participating in youth information work.

a) Creating youth information points in small municipalities nearby Kokkola in co-operation with young people. This project lasted one year and during that time one point was founded in Kaustinen and now after three years, when the project is over, a second point is about to be founded in Alajärvi. The young people defined what information was needed and then collected the information. During the project the young people got to know thoroughly the youth information principles and the lines of action. The E.U. Youth Programme supported the project.

b) Youth guide in co-operation with young people involved in the local youth council. The young people divided into groups and each group took responsibility for one topic. The Youth Information Point gathered the information and made a booklet with it in the way that the young people wanted.

c) A little youth group goes to schools in small towns and tells about international possibilities. The project is about to expand to an international network project between Austria and Finland.

2) The Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi has also done youth participation projects. For example a street theatre tour carried out by young people, and in the newest Euro <26 guides, "The My world" part has been written by a young person.

3) Youth councils in different cities and municipalities work very closely with youth information: Nova in Espoo meets in the youth information centre, Youth Voice in Helsinki is involving schools and youth workers together.

4) "Antenna" Peer to Peer youth information pilot project

Project Co-ordinator: City of Jyväskylä Youth Department

The idea

- is peer to peer information in matters which concern young people
- co-operation and develop channels so that the "voice" of young people can be heard.

- "Antenna" pilot project started in autumn 2002.
- In a project group there is one representative from each school class.
- Actions are done during the school days.

Task

"Antenna" pilot project will increase young people's participation and possibilities to influence issues which interest and affect young people. With an expanding network, it will be possible to hear opinions of young people and inform peer groups.

The network gives opportunity for non-formal education

- learning process in a meetings
- new methods to network
- experience to act as an youth advisor in their own peer groups

Contacts and meetings to the "Antenna" Youth Group

- by e-mail
- six meeting during the school year
- discussion and informing young people about tasks of "Antenna" Youth Group
- structure of services in Jyväskylä City
- structure of Youth Work and Youth Information work in Jyväskylä City

Actions

"Antenna Youth Group has their own bulletin board in a school and they have done information sessions in school classes considering topical youth issues.

"Antenna" Youth Group has brought the view of youngsters to youth services run by Jyväskylä City.

- proposals
- information themes
- comments about net-service LATURI (technical and visual proposals).

Jyväskylä Youth Information Service "Laturi" on Internet contains an Internet newspaper called "Print Mistake", which is planned, made and published by young people. There is also an area called "Young People's Voice of Jyväskylä" which contains information about participation possibilities, a direct line for the decision-maker in the City of Jyväskylä and relevant web-sites. Jyväskylä Youth Information and Counselling services organise courses on how to make own home-pages and to write stories and articles. Skills which young people learned at these courses help them to write in various media and thus to participate.

Sources:

- <http://kompassi.lasipalatsi.fi>
- E.U. Questionnaire on Information: Finland's answers

GREECE

Paper prepared by George DIAMANTOULAKIS

1. Describe briefly the youth information system in your country

The information system for issues that concern young people in Greece is administered by the Greek General Secretariat for Youth.

The General Secretariat for Youth has been established in 1982 as a governmental helping-hand, with the main goal of formulating, watching and co-ordinating government policy about youth and its connection with the rest of society.

The General Secretariat for Youth is developing its activity at two levels:

- It supports and contributes to the co-ordination of government policy about youth, proposing measures, justifying the new trends (that are being created), running programmes and providing international experience.

- It develops actions and programmes relating to youth policy, especially in the following areas:

- Participation
- Information
- Free-time activities
- Creation of enterprises.

The General Secretariat for Youth gives a special importance to co-operation with social structures, especially the organisations of young people and other bodies that have to do with youth and childhood.

Through the Youth Information Centres, young people everywhere in Greece have access to information on the above issues and through a portal (neagenia.ncsr.gr) that has been created, and the inter-connection of these centres in Greece is being attempted to facilitate direct information of young people even about local matters.

The guideline that was given by the General Secretary Youth is that young people that work at the youth information centres must have a university education and a good knowledge of computers so that the level of information will be particularly high. The site www.eurodesk.org is a basic instrument for this work also.

2. Describe one (or more) projects in which you have been involved and which enabled young people to participate in youth information work

One of the programmes that I have taken part in took place last summer. The Municipality of Poligiros in co-operation with the local Youth Council hosted 20 young people aged 18-25 in a specially prepared place in the mountain of Holomontas. The purpose was for young people to work for the environment, to get to know the local natural environment and to learn from scientists about the plants and animals of that area.

At the same time they met young people from Poligiros, and they exchanged their ideas about the environment and its protection. Our basic goal was to be able to pass to the local people the meaning of being a volunteer and participating in groups.

The cost of the programme, which lasted 21 days, was covered by the Municipality of Poligiros.

Another project that works in Greece with main goal being the participation of young people in information issues is the municipality and prefecture Youth Councils. These work as structures of energetic participation of youth and take over initiatives in matters that concern them and in subjects of general interest.

The members of these councils are representatives of the pupils, professional organisations, sports teams, etc., in the community. They prepare and organise actions about education, employment, information and free-time. The initiative for the creation of such councils belongs to the municipality.

The municipality organises the procedure of information with the local youth structures. Then with the main criterion being the collectivity and using other criteria that have to do with the local particularities, it defines the number of representatives on a basis that is proportionate to every structure and political party.

Today there are 70 Municipality Councils and 7 Prefecture Youth Councils and their network has a range of activities, including 4 conferences.

The General Secretariat for Youth has provided moral and material support for the efforts of young people to develop local structures encouraging the participation of people of their age.

Furthermore the General Secretariat for Youth gives a priority in all its programmes to proposals that are being suggested by Youth Councils.

We should mention that for the Greek Presidency of the European Union, the youth participation was established as a priority. It is remarkable that the Greek network of Youth Councils is a well-known example of good practice at the European level.

HUNGARY

Paper prepared by Peter TISZOLCZI

1. Describe briefly the youth information system in your country

The Levels of Youth Information and Counselling Services

- The basic institution of the youth information and counselling work, as a complex and professional service, is the youth information and counselling office.
- Youth information points are providing information services to the youth in the framework of other institutions or social structures.
- The youth information methodological centres are professional operators of youth information and counselling services that in addition organise methodological activities and services.

Minimum standards at all levels

- The services are free of charge.
- The services are offered for everybody without any kind of distinction. However, the primary target age group for the offices is the age group from 12 to 32 years.
- In the course of establishing relation with the clients, or during the work with the clients, the offices respect the contents of the HAYICO Professional and Ethical Code.
- The services are reliable and professional.
- The offices usually register basic data about the users of its services, at least the number of clients, their approximate age and the type of service requested.

2. Describe one (or more) projects in which you have been involved and which enabled young people to participate in youth information work

Creating the homepage of the YIC

This home-page does not only gather information, but also offers different kinds of on-line counselling for youngsters between 14 and 35.

It contains information about work / jobs, daily life / accommodation, cultural programmes, institutions and their services.

The page was established and financed by the YIC itself: www.hidinfo.hu

3. Describe one (or more) projects in your country which you know about and which enabled young people to participate in youth information work

International youth-worker training

Location: Pilisborosjenő (Hungary), February 2002

Summary: Organising a training course for youth information workers (mostly from Central and East European countries and from a member state of the European Union).

Main aims of the project:

1. Exchanging experiences (activities, working methods, services, TQM, financing, the role of the youth information offices in the youth policy of the given countries and in the international network) among the Central and East European offices and office networks;
2. Collecting and sharing experiences of the institutions that have been working in this field for several years (more than 10 years);
3. Discussing the experiences of the E.U. countries in order to assess the possibilities and difficulties the Central and East European countries have to face during their preparation process for joining the E.U.;
4. Providing education training for the workers in the youth information offices because nowadays they are mainly pedagogues, sociologists, and social workers;
5. Publishing a handbook (or CD) on youth work both in English and Hungarian since such a handbook has not been published in Hungary yet.

Target groups:

1. Youth information workers
2. Those young clients who seek information, assistance and advice from our youth offices. (On the basis of the HAYICO statistics for 2000, the Hungarian offices had 300,000 clients, and according to these figures there were altogether more than 1 million clients in all the offices of the partner organisations involved in this project.)

Other details:

Number of participants: 25 altogether from the four countries

Participating countries: Czech Republic (IDM), Romania (SZINFO), Finland (ALLIANSSI) and Hungary (HAYICO)

Professional supporters: ERYICA and CIDJ (France)

Guests: Ministry of Youth and Sport (Hungary), and Mobility Youth Service (Hungary)

Financed by: SOROS Foundation, PHARE, Mobility Youth Service (Hungary).

NETHERLANDS

Paper prepared by Maaike TRA (with Daphne de LANGE)

After "Working Together"

Quite a lot of youth information workers from the Netherlands went to the four-day international conference, "Working Together", in Brussels in November 2000. The other youth information workers read the report of this conference and used the practices it recommended in different youth information centres.

At the first yearly YIC day after this conference youth information workers were invited, but also visitors of YICs. Not just to ask them all kinds of things about being young or just their opinion. Youth information workers and youngsters made new plans for activities together. These activities were assessed and selected by (other) youngsters. The winning plan was for a team to visit schools of social work to inform others about the activities of YICs (it is a great concern of the Dutch visitors of YICs: how can YICs reach more youngsters?)

A few examples of participation projects in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands you find different kinds of participation projects. This besides the increasing attention paid to involving young visitors in youth information work.

A few YICs educate young advisors (the well-known project from Belgium): Zoetermeer, Tilburg and Amsterdam. In Tilburg, the YIC and the youth work worked together to find and reach potential young advisors. This way of working together was a great success. The YIC trained the youngsters, who were 'selected' by the social workers working with youth. Mostly young people, who don't visit institutions and have not so many skills. After the course the YIC worker gave information at meetings which the social worker organised. Of course, about useful subjects the young advisors need and which they had asked for.

There are YICs (for example, The Hague, Delft and Zoetermeer) which have a special (more or less official) YIC council where youngsters can tell their opinion and give their advice about the activities (of the YIC), the service, but also about the information materials which the YIC produced.

In Duin- en Bollenstreek (also somewhere near The Hague), you will find a youth information project (not a YIC because the villages are too small). Before the plans were made, they asked young people what they needed and formed discussion groups with young people. Lots of the ideas have worked out. They make, together with youngsters, all kinds of information products, to inform other young people. They have a weekly paper, made by young people. They also have a web-site (www.kattuk.nl). Of course the final products of this project are important, but they use all kinds of different methods to enable the voice of young people to be heard.

Several youth information workers in the Netherlands are busy with the quality issues. They have formulated clear criteria to verify the quality of a YIC and its folders and brochures. But it is also important to involve young people in this quality process. Some YIC involve the clients in their self-evaluation, or perform regular client-satisfaction investigations. During the Dutch experiment, young people were interviewed during the visit of the evaluators. Folders and brochures are judged by young information workers, but also by young people. In the future the results will be available on the Internet for the YIC and the youngsters.

In addition, there is an experiment in the Netherlands with a visiting team consisting of young people. They visit YICs and perform reviews based on criteria that they have defined themselves.

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PORTUGAL

Paper prepared jointly by Maria Joao FONSECA and Ilda RODRIGUES

Youth Information System

The youth information system in Portugal consists of a network: RNIJ (national youth information network) with information points all over the country. We provide information in fields such as employment, training, education, youth programmes, rights and duties, environment, health, cultural events, etc.

People from 11 to 30 years old are our target group although our services are sought by people of all ages, college students being our main clients. The Portuguese Network is part of the government policy to make available and implement a larger and better information for youngsters.

In order to enable young people to participate in information work and to approach youngsters to youth information, a system was created in 1996 that allowed IPJ to have young voluntary workers providing information to young people. These youngsters worked voluntarily, receiving only some pocket money as reward. They should be between 18 and 25 years old and had to have finished high school. They were recruited according to an established profile which included communication skills, research skills and interest in the subjects on which the information was provided.

These people were to work all over the country being selected either by the headquarters of IPJ (if they were to work in the national youth information centre) or by its regional services. All in all there were about 275 Youth Information Posts supervised by the IPJ regional services, each with 2 youth voluntary workers.

The candidates were selected by an interview and, after some training, they started working under the responsibility of a civil servant/co-ordinator. At first they were supposed to work for a whole year but the fact is that young people have many interests and because of school and other activities many of them had to quit after a shorter time, thus it became a programme with a very rapid turnover. On one hand, this was good because it allowed more people to participate. On the other hand, it became more complicated to train all the new volunteers, so it was decided that there would be at least two training sessions per year.

Each session consisted of training in fields such as interpersonal relations, communication, active listening, ways to facilitate behaviour and communication, information, answering questions face-to-face and by telephone, and of course youth programmes.

This was the main difficulty encountered in the prosecution of the project but it also made us co-ordinators more attentive of the needs both of the public and of the youth voluntary workers and since they were never alone the problems of lack of training were always solved. This project was financed by the government through the Secretary of State for Youth and Sports and it is still continuing in some parts of Portugal. However, at the moment, IPJ is undergoing a reorganisation amid budget restraints which have put this programme "on stand by". IPJ had more or less 600 voluntary workers earning 125 Euros per month each, which is difficult to maintain in the present situation.

Main Difficulties: the training of voluntary workers, and the lack of rewards to offer.

Strong points: This system allowed a real participation of young people in information work because they were not there for decoration. They were there to give information, to do research, and even to advise us in matters related to the needs and interests of young people.

Practical examples: voluntary workers produced the newsletters “Novas” and “Juventudes”.

Hemiciclo - the Citizenship Game

This is a Programme (financed and promoted by the Secretary of State for Youth and Sports) that enhances the participation of young people in citizenship, democracy and information since the players must be informed in order to defend a given idea.

This game is meant for high-school students (5,578 the last edition) and works in the following way:

1. Participants must defend an idea on the given subject and must organise themselves as political parties
2. They must promote an election campaign
3. After the debate and the election, the representatives of the school are chosen
4. A measure that will represent the school opinion must be voted.

In the end, chosen participants will represent their school in a regional contest and the winners of this session will represent their school at a national level in a Parliament Session that takes place in the National Parliament. A jury is appointed to choose the winners. The participation level of students also counts in the final score.

As reward the national winners will visit the European Parliament and the school they represent wins computers and other prizes.

Hemiciclo has been running for the past 5 years, and the following issues were debated: Security on the roads, European integration, Health and sexuality of young people, Fighting terrorism, and Immigration into Portugal.

Strong points: The participation of youngsters in active citizenship, and access to information by young people. The participants must be informed in order to defend their point of view and to be elected.

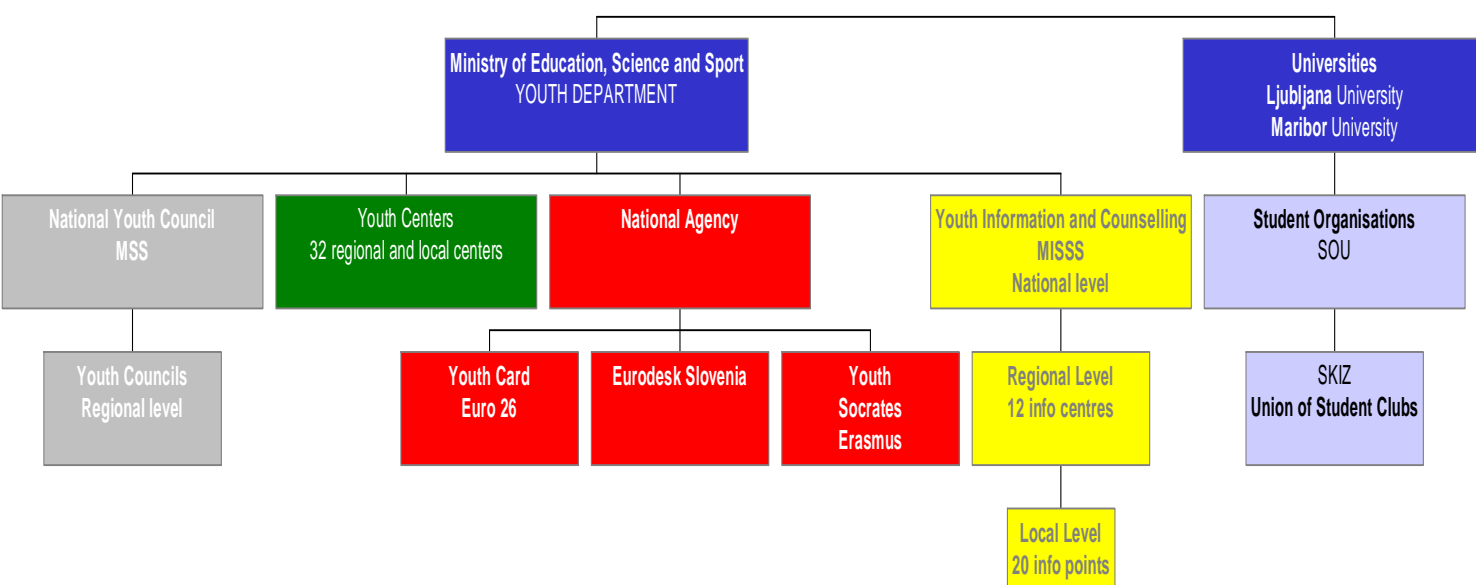
Main difficulties: Some schools quit the programme due to curriculum problems, and the unavailability of teachers or students.

SLOVENIA

Paper prepared jointly by Andrej HOLCMAN and Alenka ZAVBI

Youth Information System

The diagram below presents the structure of Youth Policy in Slovenia and the position of Youth Information and Counselling services:



Youth information and counselling policy in Slovenia is financially and professional supported by the Youth Office of the Republic of Slovenia, which is run by Ministry of Education, Science and Sports. Youth information and counselling work is based on realising "*The concept of information and counselling services for young people in Slovenia*". This document defines the guidelines for the development of information and counselling services for young people in Slovenia.

The target-group of youth information and counselling activities is all young people. Special focus is given to school dropouts and young people with less opportunities. It is also intended for all those who, in various capacities, deal with young people and who share the responsibility for their education and development.

Provision of information enables or facilitates decision-making for young people by providing them with information and, if necessary, appropriate support. It gives them the necessary skills to participate in social life and to become active citizens.

The information topics are directly related to life and work of young people and of all those who deal with them.

2. YOUNG VOLUNTEERS WORKING IN "INFOPEKA" YOUTH INFORMATION AND COUNSELLING CENTRE

In the "Infopeka" Youth Information and Counselling Centre, we are running our activities with the help of a group of volunteers since 1999. We have decided to use volunteers because of the positive effects of this kind of participation, which provides useful experience and stimulates the creativity and personal development of young people as well as motivating them to work for non-material motives, which are more important than material ones.

The 34 volunteers, who have worked in our centre during the 2002/2003 school year, have been involved in the following areas:

I. Offering help to peers with school difficulties, especially with problems at learning:

The programme provides direct assistance with learning skills, and offers stimulation and support to peers in overcoming daily problems.

II. Ensuring that young people are well informed:

All volunteers were working to ensure that young people in our city were informed about the activities and programmes of our centre (oral transmission, spreading posters, leaflets,...). Some were collecting topical information, writing articles for newspapers, preparing informative broadcasts for Maribor radio student MARŠ; other undertook the updating of the MISC INFOPEKA web-site. A group of volunteers has prepared also a presentation of the activities and programmes of our centre, which were given in some basic and secondary schools.

III. Organisation and execution of activity programmes (educational, cultural, free-time, sport ...):

The majority of the volunteers in school year 2002/2003 opted for project work. Volunteers were directly involved in the organisations of activity ("shielding") programmes, taking part in all the phases of the projects, from the initial idea and planning to their implementation. From among the numerous ideas which were suggested, seven have been implemented through projects, such as ecology, sport and recreation, literature, art, fashion, history and topical themes, graffiti.

IV. Contribution of ideas and of proposals

3. NEWSPAPERS MADE BY YOUTH

Youngsters in our country prepare their own newspapers in secondary schools. They do a research work among the students in the school, they select the information on specific problems and finally they prepare the articles for the newspaper. All their work is under the supervision of their teacher.

Some schools also have radio broadcasting between breaks. In these broadcasts they are informed about school life, topics and other stuff.

UNITED KINGDOM (Scotland)

Youth Information System in Scotland

Paper prepared by Claire Kane

Youthlink Scotland is the national Youth Agency for Scotland. They promote the development and well-being of young people in Scotland in a local, national and global context. They work with national and local government, the voluntary sector and the business community to support youth work and the youth service development.

Eurodesk UK is a service, which provides information to young people and workers on various issues from funding to travel and work opportunities in Europe. Its main aim is to encourage 12-25 year olds to be mobile and take advantage of European opportunities. Eurodesk offers full training to staff who are interested in becoming a partner. This allows existing Youth Information Points to offer invaluable information about Europe and also provides a support service for staff.

The Youth Information projects across Scotland mainly focus on topical issues. This could be healthy living, anti-social behaviour or wider topics such as sexual health and drugs and alcohol. Each project or information point is set up differently depending on the funding, the need and the target group. Local authorities tend to cater for a wide age range, such as 12-25 year olds but there are instances where they will divide them and have 12-16 and 16-25 services. (I will expand on this part further at the seminar.)

Projects I have been involved in

I currently work for Youth Support (Stirling Council), as a Youth Involvement worker. Most of my work has been and still is focused on the Dialogue Youth Initiative. This process, which was initiated by the Scottish Executive and COSLA, allows youth services and young people to work together and discuss issues which affect them. The Executive laid out five clear aims, which all 32 Local Authorities in Scotland must have at least begun by 2004. Money was allocated to each Local Authority and the time has now been extended to the end of 2004/ 2005.

The five aims included, developing an information portal, developing local discounts and developing a dialogue youth base.

Part of my job includes developing the local web-site. Dialogue youth works alongside Young Scot, who already have a national youth information portal for 12-25 year olds. The portal's main attraction is that it is information for young people, which is written by other young people. They contribute by attending fortnightly sessions or by e-mailing articles, reviews, stories, jokes or poems. There are currently around 15 young people in the group and have divided themselves into two groups, one aged 12-15 and one aged 16-25.

The young people have only been involved in this project for a few months, but already they have achieved a lot. The Stirling section of the web-site got 760 hits in the first two weeks it was live. The young people have been involved in every aspect of this project, from writing to schools and libraries to interviewing councillors and council staff. This positive attribute of the project also allows for some difficulties to be encountered along the way. The young people are trying to be professional and want to raise the credibility of the web-site and their roles within it, i.e. journalist. By trying to do so, they constantly face barriers and everything takes that little bit longer. The Stirling web-site is very new, but already the young people involved are looking at other ways they can be involved in the youth information systems and how they can develop new ones.

The other areas of Dialogue Youth also focus on enabling young people to participate in youth information work and I will expand on those further during the seminar.

Other Projects

There are many projects in Scotland, which enable young people to participate in youth information work. The one that is most relevant to my work is **Young Scot**.

In the late 1970's the then Scottish Community Education Centre recruited 10 young people to find out what post-school information there was available and what were the needs of young people. Young Scot was part of the proposed solution. They are backed and financed by local councils, national agencies and the Scottish Executive.

Young Scot offers many different services to young people, including a discount card, a 24-hour legal advice line and the web-site, which is the national youth information portal. Young people are given the opportunity to participate in this type of information work in a number of ways. There are off-line and on-line survey and discussion boards, which enable young people to contribute to the information and to comment on its relevance. There are 17 channels on the web-site, which offer information and advice about issues ranging from health, arts, leisure and finding your nearest youth information point. Consultations, cascade training and workshops are also used.

Other projects I know about include **Off the Record**. This is an information and advice project mainly targeted at the 16-25 age group, although it can be accessed by 12-16 year-olds. This is a voluntary organisation and is part funded through Aberlour Trust and Stirling Council.

This project allows young people to source the information and then to work in the centre as volunteers. The service also provides information and advice on sexual health and has a clinic with a doctor and nurse. The young people who access this project set the agenda. They offer information to other young people and they also do outreach work where necessary. (Again, I will expand on these at the seminar.)

UNITED KINGDOM (Wales)

Paper prepared by Lyjanka DROBNIK – Springboard (SITEC), Wales

1. Describe briefly the youth information system in your country

The 10 subject headings we work under in Wales are described by the Canllaw Info Index system, these consist of (1) Education, (2) Employment & Training, (3) Environment, (4) World, Europe, UK & Wales, (5) Family & Relationships, (6) Health, (7) Housing, (8) Law & Rights, (9) Money, (10) Sport & Leisure. We closely work with Canllaw Online who are our national organisation in Wales and who set our standards for information work. Our target group is the 16-30 age group and we are funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). All our staff members are required to do our Springboard Volunteer programme course but must also attend further training courses for personal development.

2. Describe one (or more) projects in which you have been involved and which enabled young people to participate in youth information work.

I was involved in one of the greatest projects that Springboard (SITEC) had ever been a part of: **Radio Springboard** was an idea proposed by a couple of our Volunteers who wanted to project a good image of young people with untapped and undisclosed talent. We formed a group of twelve young people who each had a passion for creating one of the most successful projects Springboard and Llanelli had ever seen. Before getting on the air, we had to put together a strategy so that we could apply for funding. We applied to the Prince's Trust Millennium Awards Commission, and after having a couple of meetings with one of their advisors, our application was thankfully accepted. So then the project was under way. This was where we all had to pull together as a team to prove to people in the community that we could do something successfully if given the opportunity, and also to prove it to ourselves as we had all been unemployed for a while and lost our enthusiasm and confidence. We set up five groups to deal with each section of the project, which were:

- Gathering and collating local information
- Applying for Radio Authority, PRS, PPL & MCPS Licences, Transmitter hire
- Programme Scheduling
- Music logging
- Contacts & public relations.

Each group got on with what they had to do; we came across a few minor problems but thankfully managed to get over them. A month into the project, four of our team members attended a two-day course on Radio Broadcasting & Presenting. This was very useful as the tutor showed us how to use the equipment effectively, how to produce an effective radio show using Vox Pops, Jingles, scheduling and how best to achieve an efficient radio service. We all found it very useful and were all very keen and excited to go back and filter the information to other members in the group. After a year of planning and hard work, the launch date was but a week away. We were all nervous and went around double-checking that everything was in place for the unveiling.

On the day we were broadcasting we had a visit from a Television broadcasting company who wanted to do a video shoot to put on the Volunteer channel on Sky TV. It was really cool to be put under the spot light and to publicise to the world what we were doing. The main aim of the radio station was to show to the young people working on the project and to young people in Llanelli (now the world, thanks to Sky TV) that we can do things if given the opportunity and support. This entire project was based on teamwork and the ability to motivate each other to get the job done. In the eyes of Springboard Youth Information Shop, we have achieved a great deal for people who are socially excluded by many other social groups. We have shown people what we can do when we put our minds to it. All the team have learned that, whatever the obstacle, what you cannot successfully combat as an individual you can conquer as a team, and we also learned not to be afraid of a challenge.

3. Describe one (or more) projects in your country which you now about and which enabled young people to participate in youth information work.

Info Nation-Swansea

A questionnaire was distributed within the Swansea City Centre asking young people about how they would access information; this was also distributed amongst the local schools. Info Nation was an idea born out of the ideas of young people within the Swansea District who wanted to access up-to-date relevant information in a safe environment where they would be able to obtain assistance from trained staff. The key concept of the project was that young people felt they had ownership of the project because they were involved in the planning process.

The project needed to be situated, so the young people were shown around possible locations in Swansea where everyone would be able to access it. After deciding the location, the overall outlay and design were a combined effort from the young people and an architect. Info Nation provides training to young people, which works along the same lines to the Peer Advisory Model. Young people using their new skills to help each other. Info Nation also offers Modern Apprenticeships. One of the strong points of the project was that Young people were involved in the whole process of setting it up. The difficulties encountered were that even though it was a project that wanted young staff members, older staff had to be taken on board for experience and maturity. This would be overcome through it being a working partnership. The project is financed by the “Children and Youth Partnership”, “National Assembly of Wales” and “Swansea Education Department”. The project is on-going and is proving to be a valued service within the Swansea Borough.