

EYF (Re)generation, 18 - 20 February 2015

- the story that continued -

Context:

Following the transition year (2013) in which the European Youth Foundation introduced new operational regulations, a new online system (containing a new approach) and a new website, a series of seminars were planned to reframe and strengthen the partnership with youth NGOs. The first two episodes, EYF (Re)loaded - held in 2013, targeting representatives from International, national/regional and local organisations, and EYF (R)evolution - held in 2014, targeting representatives from International organisations, were successfully implemented.

Two years later, the new approach and operational regulations are not that "new" anymore, and have been strengthened also due to the partnership and communication with youth organisations. However, despite of the fact that the system is working smoothly and is successfully used by the EYF and youth NGOs, the "new" pilot activity grant category is not as widely used and the quality of applications is not up to the standards proposed/desired by the Foundation. With this in mind, the EYF team decided to dedicate the third episode of the series to the pilot activities and invite representatives of national and local youth NGOs (the ones eligible for this type of grant and registered with EYF).

EYF (Re)generation in brief

Goals: to *receive feedback* and *share information* on the work with the new operational regulations (new online system and website), to *create a common understanding* concerning the pilot activities supported by the EYF, to *gain awareness* about the different situations organisations address with the support of EYF grants, to *revitalise transparency and accountability* between the European Youth Foundation and youth organisations, to *achieve open and informal networking* between the EYF team and the people running projects with EYF grants, to *share* best practices concerning projects.

Duration: three (3) working days, from February 18 to February 20

Participants: twenty-eight (28) participants representing twenty-eight (28) different local and national youth NGOs from 20 countries and four (4) invited guests, one from an international youth NGO, two representatives of the Programming Committee on Youth and a secretariat member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

Team: a coordinator and a trainer worked closely with the EYF team

Programme: with the EYF team principles and spirit at the core of the event (comfortable atmosphere, two-way communication, transfer of knowledge and experience, being pro-active and creating space for everyone to participate), the programme was designed with a strong consideration for both the objectives set by the EYF team and the learning needs expressed by participants. Having learned from the success of the previous two seminars, a balance between a practical approach and space for discussions was kept as well as the involvement and presence of the EYF team throughout the entire programme.

Each day was carefully planned with the goal of offering participants a sense of a natural flow and connection between the different sessions. A refreshing technique of shifting the focus between youth organisations and the Foundation enabled participants to experience the principle of two-way communication used by EYF and grasp its value.

Day 1: was dedicated entirely to creating a comfortable, open atmosphere, getting to know each other and generating the trust needed for working together. The pace was fairly slow at the beginning, allowing everyone to remember each other's names, find their space and place, and it picked up in intensity as participants got to understand the context of the seminar, of EYF and its working principles. By the time participants could learn about what each represented organisation is best at and what the contexts they are dealing with are, the group (participants and EYF team) had come together and was fully engaged in the learning process. The highlight of the day was the demonstration, by the EYF team, of the working principles of the Foundation (throughout the session on EYF's context); this allowed participants to experience a closeness and familiarity with the EYF team they never experienced with any other funding (partner) institution.

Day 2: started from the need to clarify and create a common understanding regarding terms and notions used by EYF and by youth organisations. The highlight of the day was the process in which participants were allowed to "wear the EYF shoes"; they experienced writing and assessing pilot activities applications and reports. The day ended with an engaging quiz (focused on technicalities and reporting details) that also served as yet another clarification tool.

Day 3: a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of partnerships of local youth NGOs kicked off the day, providing "ingredients" for the main ambition of the last day - reaching out to other youth NGOs that were not able to be present and support them with tools facilitating their access to pilot activities. The process set up by the team enabled participants to work in interest groups on tools of their choice. The highlight of the day was the resourcefulness and creativity of participants, as well as their commitment, as a number of tools were created (checklist on applying to the EYF, Evaluation and Needs Assessment Tool, Recipe for Success, etc.) and the seminar ended with an agreement that the EYF team will follow closely with participants the finalisation of these tools before they will be made available online on the EYF website.

Outcomes and highlights of the seminar

The evaluation focused on the highlights, the points to be improved and the next steps that could be taken in the future.

Some of the highlights

- The presence and involvement of the EYF team

"The fact that the EYF team was always present showed how much they appreciate the work we as small, local NGOs do." - quote from participants' evaluations

"The constant presence of the EYF team that was taking actively part to seminar as 'equal' and not 'a step above'"

"The project team and the participants made it best"

"the most useful part was its methodology and approach and the fact that the whole team was all the time present and supportive. Its is unique approach and great opportunity"

- comfortable and inspiring atmosphere in the group

"Nice atmosphere, many new ideas, creativity, explained things"

"Mutual cooperation, Great synergy"

"The project team and the participants made it best"

- the common understanding regarding pilot activities and experiencing the process of being in EYF shoes

"The (self) evaluation of projects and reports and a clear understanding of what is needed to facilitate the understanding by all partners involved (EYF - NGO)"

"I like how we covered pilot activities priorities and whole process regarding the application in details because this will be something I will share with my organization. And also I am more clear now about the follow up process."

"After this process, I understand why my pilot activity was rejected and I would have rejected it too if I were in EYF shoes."

"I would give my rejected application double-negation"

- an open and informal networking between the participants

"NGO leaders from different countries who might become partners and help my NGO to stand on the higher level"

- the flow of the programme and the methods used

"The highlight actually ran throughout the whole meeting and is thematic in nature. I was really impressed by the teaching methods used throughout - be it the icebreaker name games on the first day, the energiser activities in the mornings, or the ways in which open debate/discussion was inspired amongst the group. I fully intend to take these back to my organisation"

"Fish-bowl"

"The commitment of the participants but also the way how the team facilitate this process"

"Non formal learning process, really good participants, useful activities"

"It was clear, every session connected with the next one, full of information but not heavy. Perfect!"

- follow up, creativity - reaching to other youth organisations

"I think the highlight of the meeting was the last day exercise Whats next! It was amazing! It gives us an opportunity to work as team and progress"

"the new cartoon activity - Adam :))"

- selection of information to be transmitted to participants and its clarity

"For me the most important in this meeting was the information that I have got, and the support from the team!!!"

"Highlights are the knowledge and new connection that we were made"

Sessions pointed out as most useful

- The simulation session was mentioned by fifteen people as the most useful

"All of them were useful, but I like very much the Pilot activity from NGO perspective and from EYF perspectives. I think these exercises help me to find so many things and resolve many of my misunderstandings."

"The most useful were the sessions about pilot activity from an NGO perspective and pilot activity from EYF perspective, it was interesting for me to to re-asses myself, my knowledge, skills, competences during those sessions."

- The creation of tools to reach out to other youth NGOs

"Creating new tools for NGOs - It made us to think in a different way and to create tools which could be useful."

- The session focusing on Partnerships - content and method

"The partnership session on the morning of day 3. Not only did I learn about new actors with whom we can work, I also learnt about new ways that we could work with existing connections. Also, I really liked the 'fishbowl' system - I felt this foster a more interesting and interactive discussion than other sessions."

Some of the aspects to be improved

- a lot of participants proposed a longer event - more time for various sessions

"Personal time for developing our own project maybe. Rapid date with all the EYF team members"

"Actually very little, other than having an extra day to make certain activities more worthwhile"

"make it longer as it's hard to digest so much info in 3 days"

"Maybe I would add more time for each session, but these would lead to 4 or 5 days training."

;) So it was very good!!!"

- Add energisers or other methods to facilitate the start of sessions

"I'd include some games before starting session, especially after lunch"

"I would put a music carpet before the start of the sessions"

- Ten out of twenty-four answers to the question "What would you change" start with "Nothing..."

"Nothing to change! Keep the EYF team together because you are making very good things. Just keep on that way!"

"What you thought you did better I rather thought you did best!"

Added-value to the organisations

- "I need a whole day to share this, but will limit myself to the following conclusions:

1. We shall reconsider our application to EYF and try to do it muuuuuch better,
 2. We will organise a training session for the youth organisations we work with locally to introduce the work, the opportunities and the application procedures of EYF,
 3. We will discuss the chances for establishing an European network of our affiliates represented in Europe within the context of EYF priorities and current calls,
 4. We will implement some of the working methods in our training activities.
- 5,6,7.....will try to use any piece of the information as a separate tool for reaching more young people."*

- "Uff..Really really loads of things. Everything that we read and inform us about via website, guidelines, trying to understand for months, now only in 3 days become so much clear and very inspiring for our future work. And not only in the terms of information, but methodology and approach as well."

Proposals for the future

Participants:

- a majority of participants suggest organising the same event for other youth NGOs, thus giving the same opportunity to more organisations to get to know EYF
- another recurrent suggestion refers to adding at least one more day to allow participants to get to know each other better and also to go deeper in some of the issues

Team:

- organising de-centralised regional events in various parts of Europe - using local resources (CoE representations, etc.)

- creating an EYF pool of experts that can support both centralised (in the centres) and decentralised EYF activities
- organise a second EYF (Re)generation seminar to reach out to more local/national NGOs and focus on the quality of pilot activities.

Dissemination

Within a few days after the seminar, several participants informed the EYF team about their efforts to disseminate the results of the EYF (Re)generation seminar. Some of the dissemination contexts / means are:

- meetings with youth, volunteers and youth NGOs
- articles on websites, local and regional online news portals
- meeting regional peer networks
- presenting results and insights in regional NGOs Cafes
- running short workshops in international meetings

EYF (Re)generation experience in 'one' colourful word:

Satisfying, Informed :), Clear and concise, Motivation, GRATEFUL, marvellous, Understanding, Inspired!!!, "Haaaappppppyy! :) But seriously, it was a great learning outcome for 2 working days", "In case you have noticed, I am not a person of "one word"-:) Still, I think that apart from emotional comments, I would say PProfessionalism", Linkages, challenging, "As I said in the circle : collaboration. Both from the team and participants", Participation, Croissant, "amazing!!! THANK YOU A LOT!!!!!!", Amazing, Thanks, "Learning-sharing-learning. Thank you", fulfilling, "Innovative. THANK YOU A LOT FOR SUCH GREAT MEETING!", MOTIVATED!, "IDONTWANNAGOHOME... just kidding PERFECT! :-)", Knowledge of power!.