



“ Change the village, Challenge yourself, You(th) can make a difference !”

Report of the Double study session held by
RURAL YOUTH EUROPE (RYEurope)
&
MOUVEMENT INTERNATIONAL de la JEUNESS AGRICOLE
et RURALE CATHOLIQUE (MIJARC)

In co-operation with the European Youth Centre Budapest
Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Budapest
25th March – 1st April 2006



This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session: It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of the Council of Europe.

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• Team

Mario D'Agostino (Italy) - external trainer
Franz Fensl (Austria)
Rob Govaerts (Belgium)
Christine Hope (United Kingdom)
Eija Kauniskangas (Finland)
Sabine Klocker (Austria)
Gilbert Küpper (Belgium)
Isabelle Maras (Belgium)
Agnès Rousseaux (France)
Annette Schneider (Hungary) - educational adviser
Elisabeth Wehrle (Germany)
Heini Ynnilä (Finland)

• Editor

Isabelle Maras, Project coordinator of „Change the Village, Challenge Yourself!“

Rural Youth Europe

Allianssi-talo, Asemapäällikönkatu 1
F-00520 Helsinki
Finland
Tel: + 358 20 755 2600
Fax: +358 20 755 2627
E-mail: office@ruralyouth europe.com
Website: www.ruralyouth europe.com

MIJARC Europe

53, Rue J. Coosemans
B - 1030 Brussels
Belgium
Tel.: +32 - 2 742 30 64
Fax: +32 - 2 734 92 25
E-mail: office-europe@mijarc.info
Website: www.mijarc.info

FOREWORD

Dear friends and members of Rural Youth Europe and MIJARC Europe,

This Double Study Session constitutes a turning point and a successful cooperation between our both organisations towards more recognition of rural youth's concerns at all levels.

A common work around the theme of participation is indeed of the utmost importance, in a time where the European Union is currently making efforts to 'give the floor' to EU citizens and particularly young people by a growing variety of channels.

In that purpose, the Session represented the highlight of the "Change the Village – Challenge Yourself ! You(th) can make a difference" project, the European pilot project set up by the two organisations on the topic of rural youth participation throughout Europe. It was therefore a great opportunity to confront the issues covered so far by the Study with the outcomes of the discussions held by the young participants. Their inputs will be of great help to 'nourish' this initiative with new perspectives and to put the rural youth topic on the political agenda!

During this Study session, we experienced how rich our different experiences are, but also became aware of the difficulties to be overcome in order to be able to understand each other and integrate different views and behaviours. As both organisations usually gather their own young members on the occasion of smaller seminars, this Double Study session was a particularly rich learning experience about each of our own movements.

I, on behalf of the two organisations, firmly hope that the member organisations will benefit from the gain of experience, knowledge and above all, from the loads of motivation brought by the participants to set up projects fostering participation in rural areas.

This Study Session greatly contributed to set down a number of obstacles the participants had, while helping them gaining method and self-confidence when it comes to address their *desiderata* in front of decision-makers, be it at local, regional, national or European levels !

The youngsters actually produced great personal projects at the end of the session: I am convinced that they will implement them with heart and conviction, as some of them are currently doing !

I would like to warmly thank all the parties who were involved in the process and in the study Session itself, enabling such successful outcomes:

Firstly the 58 hard working participants who showed a great enthusiasm and motivation (and helped constitute the documentary basis for this work; many thanks to Christine as well for her help for the report);

Then, the Preparatory team (Sabine, Gilbert, Agnès, Lise, Rob, Heini, Christine), Annette Schneider as the CoE educational advisor and Mario d'Agostino, external trainer. Furthermore, we would like to express our special thanks to Mrs Antje Rothmund for her useful advice and accurate inputs, which have greatly contributed to the success of this seminar.

Finally, many thanks to the whole staff of the EYC Budapest, and especially its Secretariat, who guaranteed the best working conditions and friendly atmosphere during our stay.

It has been a great experience, a very productive Study session with a lot of pleasure during the week !

Project coordinator



Isabelle Maras

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**Double Study Session
on rural youth participation and local development
European Youth Center, Budapest
(26th March – 2nd April 2006)**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why this Study session ?

The main aim of the Double Study session was to enable youngsters to participate actively in the society. Participation of young people is one of the main priorities of the Directorate Youth and Sports' program. Furthermore, this Session's focus was put on the issues of social inclusion of rural young people in their area, intercultural dialogue and youth policy development.

Therefore this important meeting contributed in many ways to the priorities that the CoE has defined for the period 2006 – 2008.

Overall aim of the Study session

- To enable young people to improve their life in a sustainable way in rural areas through their active participation in society.

In pursuing this aim, the preparatory team and our both organisations made use of the Council of Europe's expertise and ground experience. We also relied on the past experiences made within MIJARC Europe and Rural Youth Europe's formerly led activities.

Objectives of the Study session

- To empower young people to realise opportunities and put them into practice
- To exchange participants' realities and experiences through practical examples
- To provide some practical and theoretical knowledge to motivate young people to work for their projects and initiatives favouring participation
- To multiply skills and knowledge gained at the Study session within participants movements and communities back home
- To provide tools and motivate young people to co-operate with decision-makers in society
- To present and discuss the results of the Study "Change the Village – Challenge Yourself !"
- To strengthen networking and cooperation between (rural) youth organisations
- To identify future steps/strategies needed in the view of the overall aim
- To revise, work on and communicate recommendations
- To introduce Rural Youth Europe and MIJARC Europe's participants and the CoE

Profile of participants

Young participants had different backgrounds, as they came from 29 different countries, 30 organisations across Europe. The countries included: Austria, Armenia, Azerbaïdjan,

Belgium, Bulgaria, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Macedonia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Russia.

As regards the participants' profile, it is to underline that they were active in the field of youth participation or local development; motivated in a possible follow-up and the multiplication of the topics of the seminar; multipliers (volunteers and staff) active at local/regional/national level in a youth organisation. They were between 18 and 30 years of age; a member of a Rural Youth organisation since at least six months – or a member of another youth organisation being active in rural areas; with good English language skills and willing to attend the whole duration of the course.

Participants were also motivated to develop their knowledge and competence in youth participation and to share their experiences with other participants. They were ready to debate the above mentioned issues in a Round table debate with European decision-makers and had an interest in giving recommendations to local and European level governing bodies.

Learning Outcomes of participants

The participants used the opportunity they were given to deepen their knowledge on the different ways they have to participate in their local areas. They exchanged and discovered different rural realities all over Europe.

They also learnt how to address their issues of concern in front of decision makers, and how to push their ideas to the forefront and defend them in the political sphere, be it at regional, national or European levels.

Intercultural learning was one of the most important learning experiences for the participants and the organizers focused their efforts on the various working groups and collective inputs in this field. This intercultural gain was often coupled with a continuing and fruitful exchange among participants but also with experts about best practices led in other countries, for instance through the visit of a local best practice example in the Hungarian countryside.

In the Working groups held on focused topics, participants analysed the problems, needs and situation of young people living in rural areas and worked out concrete solutions and recommendations in the fields of education, mobility, employment and agriculture. They concretely tackled the following questions: What are the major challenges, faced by young people in Europe in relation to the topic of rural youth participation ? What are the main strategies that young people in rural areas can have in order to address the issues of employment, education or leisure time ? How can these strategies be implemented ?

During the Double Study Session, the participants gained a sound understanding of the main European institutions and of their functioning and got also acquainted to a certain extent with the 'political scene' , as they could directly talk with the political decision-makers invited to the Talk-show. In that perspective, they learned different working methods and discussed burning topics related to youth and rural areas before receiving some basic knowledge on how to advocate their ideas in front of political representatives and thus make their voice heard.

Participants underlined that they enjoyed very much getting an overview of the problems and expectations of European rural young people as well as of the existing initiatives in this field. Many of them could not easily find out how to carry out their projects and felt they were passive. They especially appreciated the intense group work and exchange of best practice among participants, as it strongly motivated them to participate actively in their community and in the society in general. Most of them gained a lot from the organized Talk Show and got encouraged to approach decision-makers back home.

Those intense discussions and productive thinking enabled the participants to review the former recommendations on rural youth and to draft a common Final statement at the end of the Session.

In addition, participants learned about the EU funding possibilities and the way they can develop their own project. After this busy week, they had indeed the possibility to use the newly gained knowledge by thinking about a personal project that they would like to implement at local, regional or national level after their return.

Further outcomes

With the achievement of the aims and objectives of the Study Session “Change the Village, Challenge Yourself!”, MIJARC Europe and RYEurope aimed at widely promoting more participation and involvement for rural young people from their own member movements while strengthening their cooperation and enlarging their existing European network, notably through new partnerships.

Indeed, this Double Study session symbolised the strengthened cooperation between the members of both major European Rural Youth movements (MIJARC and Rural Youth Europe). Further, the cooperation between the 30 national / regional movements participating in the session was also reinforced.

The movements will continue and promote this common work and cooperation in the future towards more achievements in this field.

The session also enabled the organisation to have a feedback on the first results and the next steps of the pilot project “Change the village – Challenge yourself – You(th) can make a difference” by our members all over Europe.

Besides, the Study Session enabled to re-establishing sound links between MIJARC Europe - Rural Youth Europe and decision makers and thus help gain a better visibility of our work on European level.

Some concrete commitments were made by young people and European level decision makers during the Round table debate: both organisations will keep maintaining the close link with the panel participants to shape a future cooperation with powerful political organisations in the youth field (Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE, European Parliament, European Commission, European Youth Forum, CEJA, Economic and Social European Committee).

To this end, a Final statement entailing some recommendations was worked out by the participants during the study session on the basis of existing previous official texts and study results and will be transmitted to concerned decision-makers.

A report of the Study session will be drafted as well as a Best practice handbook (end of 2006). In addition, a video summarizing the Double study session was produced.

Methodology of the Study session

The working methods of the Study session were greatly based on the various results of the Study “Change the Village, Challenge Yourself!”, which has been led since last February 2005 and benefited from the inputs of hundreds of European youngsters (survey, interviews). The methods thus aimed at facilitating the exchange of information between participants and at bringing people to discuss in working groups on different topics of concern for them on the basis of the survey results (graphs, tables) and interviews’ inputs.

In addition, the accent was put on the exchange of best practices and sharing about their rural realities in various parts of Europe: the contributions by participants and team members have given a broad picture of existing initiatives, projects and approaches in order to better participate and get involved in rural areas (See personal action plans).

Educational approach

The working methods of the Study session facilitated the inputs coming from the participants and the exchange of information and knowledge coming out from the results-related discussions, as well as between the team and the participants. The Session profited from the educational approaches given by Annette and Mario, with the support of Antje Rothmund.

In addition, the Education Pack and the T-Kit on Intercultural Learning were used.

Throughout the session, varied exercises and working methods in common (Working groups, Buzz groups) were used and some background material (about the CTV project, European institutions) was distributed.

Some advice on how to address political leaders were also provided and used to assist participants in developing their own individual initiatives or group projects on rural youth participation.

Follow-up

Study session reports, best practice and interviews were published in newsletters and websites of the "Change the Village, Challenge Yourself!" project and on RYEurope and MIJARC Europe's websites as well as transmitted to their movements.

A letter to decision-makers and notably members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe was sent, accompanied with the Final statement in order to maintain the contact and co-operation with decision-makers from the European to the local level.

The Final statement will be further disseminated within the movements.

In order to contribute to the elaboration of the Best practice Handbook, there will be a strong support and promotion towards the achievement of projects and the compilation of the resulting best practices, especially with the dissemination of a Best practice form among the movements.

Some of the personal action plans drafted by the participants are currently being implemented on different levels (European / national / local level), for instance in Macedonia.

The results of the project Survey will be further analysed and the second round of interviews is currently ongoing.

Rural Youth Europe will follow up this Study session with a multicultural European Rally in July 2006 called "Pearls in contrast- multicultural aspects in rural youth" to be held in Latvia (15-22 July) which will deal with the participation-related issues addressed during the last Session in Budapest.

In addition, RYEurope will have a seminar in Autumn 2006 in Wales, where participants will work in the issues related to rural youth participation and involvement in society. Furthermore, many follow-up projects will be taking place within or member organisations at local/regional/European levels and will be supported by both organisations.

Closely coupled with the "Change the Village, Challenge Yourself!" project's achievements, all these actions concretely aim at leading to further development and achievements and enlargement of the organisations' work related to the involvement of youngsters in the fields of participation, like dissemination of background information, etc.

Daily programme

For details refer to the table on the next page.

(Breakfast 8:00-9:00 am; Coffee breaks from: 10:00-10:30 am and: 4:00-4:30 pm;
Programme ends around 6:30 pm).

**PROGRAMME - Double Study Session – Rural Youth Europe / MIJARC Europe
(26.03 - 02.04.06) - European Youth Center Budapest**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
9:30 am						
	INTRODUCTION	Presentation of the STUDY/project	WORKING GROUPS	Start: 9:30 ROUND TABLE – DEBATE	Visit to LOCAL RURAL AREAS	FOLLOW-UP on all levels
	Expectations/ motivations/fears	Presentation of the STUDY/project	WORKING GROUPS	ROUND TABLE – DEBATE End: 13:00	Visit to LOCAL RURAL AREAS	CAMPAIGN: LOCAL AND EUROP. LEVELS
Lunch: 1:00-2:30 pm						
Arrival of participants	TEAM BUILDING Sharing realities	WORKING GROUPS	PREPARATION of DEBATE	FREE TIME in town	FOLLOW-UP DEBATE Recommandations	EVALUATION
	TEAM BUILDING Sharing realities	WORKING GROUPS	INPUT “from INSIDE” (How to address political leaders ?)	FREE TIME in town	How to put them in practice/ BEST PRACTICES	EVALUATION
Dinner: 7:00 pm						
Welcome evening Ice-breaking	Organizations’ market		INTERNATIONAL BUFFET	DINNER OUT		FAREWELL PARTY

**“ Change the village,
Challenge yourself,
You(th) can make a difference !”**

Double study session held by
Rural Youth Europe & MIJARC Europe

DAY-BY-DAY REPORTS

European Youth Centre Budapest

25th March – 1st April 2006

Monday 27th March 2006

1. Title of the session

- Welcome and Opening
- Introduction
- Expectations and Fears
- Team-building
- Sharing realities
- Organisations' market
- Re-groups

2. Objectives

- To introduce the participants and the team
- To introduce them to the seminar – aims & objectives; programme of the week
- To introduce the CoE
- To introduce both movements: Rural Youth Europe and MIJARC Europe
- To get to know each other (ice-breaking, team-building games)
- To learn more about participants' expectations and fears
- To learn more about the pax' countries and organisations

3. Programme

The programme started with getting to know each other activities, followed by the official welcome and opening of the course. The aims and objectives as well as the programme were introduced, an introduction of RYEurope and practical info given; furthermore, the expectations and fears of participants were discussed.

The afternoon focused on team building and sharing realities within small working groups. The day was finalised with Reflection-groups. Later in the evening, the participants had the occasion to introduce the activities of their movement during the Organisations' market.

4. Educational methods used

- Ice-breaking, getting to know together and team-building activities
- Games
- Working in pairs
- Individual work (expectations/fears)
- Group work/discussions (sharing realities and perceptions in working groups?)
- Presentations in plenary (done by facilitators for the various introductions)

5. Thematic Discussions or inputs

5.1 Introduction

Sabine Klocker, Secretary General of Rural Youth Europe, shortly recalls the tenue of the Symposium in 1998 and the first steps of cooperation with the CoE, at the beginning of the 1990's.

She stresses the fact that it should be an honor for the participants to have been selected by the CoE for this activity: therefore there are expectations for your active involvement and a lot of work from them.

The two movements Rural Youth Europe and MIJARC Europe will have the follow-up of this Session as well as in within the own pax' movements.

Another highlight of this week is to be the Talk-show on Thursday.

She reassures them not to feel intimidated by the microphone.

The goal is to be open and to learn from the others. The youngsters participating/present must contribute as such as possible, to share, to be self-confident, and they will enjoy this session !

5.2 Introduction of the EYCB (by Mrs Antje Rothmund, Director of the EYC)

After having warmly welcomed the participants, Mrs Rothmund recalled the Symposium held in 1998 between Rural Youth Europe (formerly ECYF 4HC), MIJARC Europe and CEJA together, which met for a week in order to develop propositions and politics towards European institutions.

The outcomes of the last meeting were really important. As a youth generation usually lasts 5 years, it is important that the organisations come back today to work on this theme.

Founded in 1959, the Council of Europe (CoE) mainly defends and protects human rights¹.

The CoE has 35 years of tradition of cooperation with the youth organisations, its most traditional close partners (1972).

After the political changes occurred in 1989, the CoE decided to create a center in an Eastern European country in order to develop policies for youth. This Center was therefore set up in 1995 in Budapest (Hungary).

The European Youth Center Budapest is a place where networking, cooperation and the opening of minds is promoted². The goal is to use this activities to bring youth organisations the means and tools in order to give young people new possibilities.

The project "Change the village – Challenge yourself !" is about youth participation.

It is also about introducing youth participation in the youth making in order to change your environment positively and about exchanging positive measures on how to improve the living conditions of young people in the countryside.

The two organisations which prepared this activity have a main concern.

Youth organizations are indeed very recognized as youth policy makers, but not so much as partners in rural development and development as such (e.g. in agricultural, economic matters).

Hence the goal is to bring your input; to bring a new sort of dialogue where young people are taken seriously in decision-making processes, much beyond free time activities.

The young participants come from a wide spectrum of European countries and organisations, with certainly different life realities. Though they will also find that they have a lot of common chances and obstacles to move forward in order to develop cooperation inside and outside their organisations.

The following main questions will be addressed during the week:

Why is it useful for other people in society, for political leaders or communities that young people participate?

¹ The Council of Europe is often confused with the European Council (one of the main European Union institutions, in Brussels), because they carry the same flag.

² For instance, around 120 activities/year take place within the EYC.

Why is it a resource that young people are active rather than not considered by decision makers ?

Then the opportunity the participants will have to go to the Hungarian countryside and visit two local projects as well as the facilities and the personal the pax had at their disposal in the Center during the week were recalled.

The young people were finally wished a lot of positive spirit to speak with each other and to exchange rich experiences: "Enjoy the week, it is a challenge but also a chance !".

5.3. Background of the cooperation between MIJARC Europe and Rural Youth Europe on the issue of rural youth participation

In 1997, the two organisations met at the EYCB with/in the objective to talk about the situation of rural youngsters and gathered for the first time parliamentarians and young participants.

In 1998, a Symposium on Youth participation in Rural Development gathering 50 participants was held in Budapest (MIJARC Europe, RYEurope, CEJA-JR Youth Committee). This meeting aimed at giving work perspectives and some recommendations to political decision makers.

In the aftermath, the 1530 Recommendation of the Parliamentary assembly of the CoE was drafted in 2001. It constituted the first recognition of the situation of rural youth as a direct consequence of the 1998 seminar.

Two years ago, the two organisations MIJARC Europe and RYEurope met again in order to pursue this initial project.

In February 2005, they set up the two-year "Change the village – Challenge yourself !" project based on a online survey/questionnaire, rounds of interviews, a review of best practices and European national studies.

This year, the Study Session gathers 58 participants coming from 22 different organisations. As members of the organisations, the participants represent more than 700 000 young rural people. In Budapest, their aim is to bring forward a common discourse as well as their expectations and views on the challenges which are today at stake for young rural Europeans.

For nine years, a common work has been being undertaken towards a recognition of rural youngsters in European (public) policies. It is underlined that it is of the pax's responsibility to pursue this story in order to make it rich, long and fruitful.

5.4 AIMS and OBJECTIVES of the Study Session

AIM

To enable young people to improve their life in a sustainable way in rural areas through their active participation in society.

OBJECTIVES

- To empower young people to realise opportunities and put them into practice
In the next weeks, the participants will learn different techniques and practices in order to act in their communities.
When they will be back home, they will "pass them on"/tell their colleagues, their organizations, in order to transmit what has been said.
- To exchange participants' realities and experiences (through practical examples)

- To multiply skills and knowledge gained at the Study session within participants movements and communities back home
- To provide tools and motivate young people to co-operate with decision-makers in society
For instance, the moderator Christine mentioned the 'preparation to the debate' to be held on Wednesday on how to communicate with political leaders.
- To present and discuss the results of the Study "Change the Village – Challenge Yourself!"
- To strengthen networking and cooperation between (rural) youth organisations
- To identify future steps/strategies needed in the view of the overall aim
It was underlined that the participants would have to decide how they want to evolve within their organization.
- To revise, work on and communicate recommendations

5.5 Overview of the 'Programme of the week'

Human Bingo before the break (*See Appendix 1*)

Introduction of each member of the Preparatory team, each of them with different backgrounds.

5.6 Presentation of the organisations Rural Youth Europe and MIJARC Europe

➤ Rural Youth Europe – introduced by Sabine Klocker, Secretary General (*Appendix 2*)

The Board of Rural Youth Europe consists of a chairman, a vice-chairman and formal Board members representing each of them one region. After their mandate, its members are replaced according to a kind of rotation each 2 years.

Sabine, who had been running the office of RYEurope in Vienna for two years and a half, will leave her functions after the Study session, at the end of April. Eija Kauniskangas will take over her job in Finland.

The RYEurope's objectives are:

- To further and promote the activities of rural youth organisations (local, national, international, etc..) coming from rural youth.
- To educate and train young people who are active in the field.

The organisation gathers 150 000 members all over Europe.

It entails 3 types of organisations:

- 1. Rural youth organisations
- 2. Young farmers organisations (Scotland, Wales, England, Poland, Denmark)
- 3. 4H Clubs: most of them coming from Scandinavian and Baltic countries (Latvia, Lituania, Estonia, Sweden, Finland...).

Activities:

- Spring seminars (multipliers)
- European Rally: it is a big multilateral youth exchange taking place every year in a different country.
 - This year in Latvia, entitled "Pearls in contrast - multicultural aspects of rural youth" (15th-22nd July 2006).
- Seminars:
 - The next Autumn seminar "Breaking the barriers" will take place in October in Cardiff (Wales – UK) (15th-22nd October 2006).

Newsletter and website updates

➤ **MIJARC Europe – introduced by Gilbert Kuepper, Secretary General** (*Appendix 3*)

MIJARC Europe is the International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth: it is a movement of democratic and self-organised youngsters, an international network of national & regional movements and a training / education movement, aware of the situation of rural youngsters in Europe

An action-oriented movement from young people for young people, MIJARC Europe is a movement based on Christian values, gathering rural youngsters who want to participate in the building of a fairer society.

MIJARC-Europe's orientations and concerns are about:

Rural development, Gender mainstreaming, Agriculture and food-sovereignty, Sustainable development, Fair global development, Glocal economical alternatives, Youth policy, Youth participation and Christian values.

As for the structure, MIJARC is part of the organisation MIJARC World (present in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe).

The European Assembly is part of it and entails the European Executive Board (governing body of the movement, gathering representatives of national movements) and the European team (3 representatives of the E.B. dealing with activities, representation and finances, supporting the European Secretary).

The European Assembly is the highest decision-making body of the organisation: it is held every 3 years, with all national movements represented.

Objectives of MIJARC:

- Enter in contact / exchange with youngsters all over Europe / the world
- Participate in seminars, working groups and study visits
- Exchange about your ideas, realities and experiences
- Link your own projects with other projects in Europe
- Contribute to build a common political position on European and / or worldwide level for a fairer rural world
- Promote your positions and be the voice of rural youngsters next to the decision makers
- Become active on European and / or worldwide level.

The member movements are: Belgium, Catalonia, France, Germany, Portugal, Romania and Spain.

MIJARC Europe's activities:

- European Study sessions, seminars & study visits
- Working groups on European and worldwide level (Agriculture, Glocal economical alternatives, Youth participation for a sustainable development)
- Working camps dealing with different topics
- (Inter)continental exchanges of rural youth groups
- Networking with other (rural) youth organisations, agriculture organisations...
- Pilot project «Change the village – Challenge Yourself !»

Newsletter and websites updates:

Publishing of the magazine "Info-Europe" – MIJARC Europe's platform for discussion and exchange of knowledge, experiences and information

5.7. Organisations' market

All participants were asked to produce a display on their country and organisation. This activity gave everyone an opportunity to learn about his or her fellow team members and organisations.

Every participant had the chance to ask questions on the respective organisations and to collect advertising merchandise i.e. posters, leaflets, stickers and pens.

6. Recommendations and outcomes of group discussion:

6.1. EXPECTATIONS - FEARS of participants regarding the Double Study Session of Rural Youth Europe and MIJARC Europe at the EYCB:

The participants had to get to know each other and went into groups of three saying their name. Then they had to walk around again and to get this time into a group of five people saying their name. Finally, they had to walk around again and to create some groups of seven people they belonged to for the next following 20 minutes.

Using the metaphor of the sun and the flash, the participants were asked to write their fears on the pink paper which were put up on the FEAR FLASH and on the yellow paper put on the EXPECTATIONS SUN.

EXPECTATIONS – “What do you expect or want to gain from this Study session ?”

- To get more knowledge about other youth organizations' culture(s)
- To receive new inputs to take and to talk about
- To find (new) partners to cooperate with
- To have interesting free times
- To make new friends
- To have enough time to talk

FEARS – “Do you have any fears related to this seminar ?”

- To receive too much input
- To receive too much infos
- Not to be able to connect with people
- To have too little time to visit the city
- To experience language problems: many (concerns) of both sides
- To experience endless discussions
- To forget important things
- To finally have just a general proposition

6.2. SHARING REALITIES and perceptions

The participants were splitted up in pre-selected groups, according to their gender, organisation structure and geographical location.

The groups were asked to share their experiences and realities about their individual village. They had then to produce a collage village to put on the landscape - a large pre-drawn valley - to represent their collective village experience and to present back their common findings/realities to the whole group.

After this work, the groups re-joined and put the villages on the landscape:

As for the SIMILARITIES, most groups reported:

- A church
- A primary school
- Secondary school education means: ex. travelling on a school bus daily
- Only one road into the village
- Lack of public transport
- Central village meeting point, e.g. the village Hall
- Village houses close to the village centre and farms further out.
- Safer life as in lower criminal activity,
- Increasing number of elderly people in the village

As for the DIFFERENCES, it seems to be dependent on the village size:

- Lack of social activity and work which created a smoking and alcohol problem
- Youth centre
- Library, but no internet access or even computers
- Village identity through a sporting team
- Mobile mast tower

Some surprising comments and assessments came out:

- Apart from public houses, all other forms of entertainment were through voluntary organisations. Paid forms of entertainment were limited to towns and cities only, for example cinema.
- Joining up of community resources, public house at the rear of the shop.
- People living in the village but not acting locally and only sleeping in their house. Lack of understanding of communal village life.
- Depending on where you live, houses may be more expensive or cheaper in rural areas.
- Reduction of services (shops, etc.) because of centralisation due to supermarkets.
- The youngsters of this generation have less opportunities than their parents.

6. Debriefing - Evaluation in Reflection groups

At the end of the day, the participants met in small groups, the 'Re-groups', with one of the team member (those groups' composition remained the same over the whole week). The 'Re-groups' aimed at exchanging and giving their opinions about the activities they took part in during the day. They had the opportunity to assess the content of the Study session and how their feelings or reactions about the outputs they benefited from but also about their own inputs into the collective work.

7. Resources used

Texts

White paper on Youth policy - A new impetus for European youth (2001);
Symposium Report " Youth participation in Rural development" (1998) by Rural Youth Europe (formerly known as European Committee of Young Farmers and 4H Clubs), MIJARC Europe and CEJA. Council of Europe – European Youth Centre (Strasbourg)

Websites

Council of Europe: www.coe.int

Directorate of Youth and Sport: www.coe.int/youth
European Youth Center: www.eycb.coe.int
“Covenant” with the European Commission: www.training-youth.net

Rural Youth Europe: <http://www.ruralyoutheuropa.com/>
MIJARC Europe: <http://www.mijarc.org/>

Tuesday 28th March 2006

1. Title of the session

- Presentation of the Study and of the “Change the village, Challenge yourself!” project
- Working groups

2. Objectives

- To present the “Change the village – Challenge yourself !” project, the methodology and its focus
- To deliver the first results of the online survey and the first round of interviews
- To initiate a discussion upon some further results (based on graphs and tables) related to the situation of rural youth in Europe between the participants (environment, participation, needs & expectations)
- To focus the youngsters’ thinking on determined issues with common work led in Working groups

3. Programme

The morning programme was dedicated to the overall presentation of the eponym project “Change the village – Challenge yourself !” and the delivering of the first part of the results obtained so far, held by Isabelle Maras, the Project coordinator.

The first part of the programme started with the presentation of the scope and methodology of the project, and the results of the first round of interviews were delivered after a short energizer.

After the morning break, the results of the online survey were presented to the participants. They then had the opportunity to think and exchange about the results in small groups and on the basis on further graphs which were distributed.

In the afternoon, the participants met in different Working groups to discuss the main issues covered by the presentation and which are currently at stake in rural areas.

The day was concluded with Re-groups meetings.

4. Educational methods used

A) Educational methods used included the presentation of quantitative and qualitative methods used for the survey and project work, working on graphic sources and in small groups on focused themes, but also energizers. The participants had the opportunity to ask questions (about the design of the survey, its scope, objectives).

B) Educational methods used included group energizers and input from the preparatory team before the Working groups.

Group discussions, teamwork and thematic presentations.

5. Thematic input on the project “Change the Village – Challenge Yourself!”

A) Delivery of the Study: methodology, focus

Isabelle Maras, the project coordinator, held the presentation of the methodology employed for the whole project in **3 different parts**, namely the context, the project itself and the topics covered, the process.

The context

Basic of official and political texts (*Appendix 4*)

The presentation begun with the setting of the context which precluded the cooperation between MIJARC and Rural Youth Europe as well as with the Council of Europe and political decision-makers on the theme of rural youth participation.

Some political texts are fundamental on the topic:

- White paper on Youth policy - A new impetus for European youth (2001)
- Recommendation 1530 on the Situation and prospects of young people in rural areas (2001) - Assembly of the Council of Europe³
- Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (2003) - Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe
- Symposium Report “ Youth participation in Rural development” (1998) by Rural Youth Europe (formerly known as European Committee of Young Farmers and 4H Clubs), MIJARC Europe and CEJA. Council of Europe – European Youth Centre (Strasbourg)

The project itself and the topics

The project has been addressing the following topics:

- Rural youth people and their environment (Identification of youths with their region, role of agriculture)
- The Social System in the Village: needs of rural youth (Formal and non-formal education, Employment, Leisure opportunities, Values and general needs)
- Youth participation (society and politics, are the existing options practicable/interesting/addressing rural youth?, role of politics and how young people experience it)
- Youth work in rural areas (Activities on a local level, role of youth organisations, schools and other associations, new methods & approaches in rural youth work? Specific youth policy for rural areas?)
- What youngsters want to change

The process had 4 main parts:

- **i) The survey** (february 2005 - february 2006)⁴ constituted in an on-line translated questionnaire elaborated in order to reach young Europeans’ opinion until February 2006 and in the first round of interviews.

³ “The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

Encourage young people to participate in local political life in rural areas (through consultation, encouragement to participate in decisions concerning them, youth councils, etc.) (...)”

⁴ i) What is the situation of young people living in rural areas in Europe? How do they participate in local projects? What are their hopes and fears? What are the main messages of the survey at this stage?

- **ii) Exchange of practices** (june 2005 – october 2006)⁵ during the seminars, meetings of both organisations held in the last months.
- **iii) Elaboration of recommendations** (april 2006)⁶ during the “highlight” of this Study Session, with discussions on the main points raised by the questionnaires and notably the “Round table” with political decision-makers - while collecting more qualitative data (second round of interviews).
- **iv) Definition of a strategy** (october 2006 - february 2007)⁷ with the elaboration of reports as well as the communication & dissemination of the outcomes of the Study; planning of the future steps to be undertaken/to undertake.

B) Presentation of the results

To get those results, the European questionnaire was housed on line for over four months (from September 2005 until February 2006) (in nine different languages) and in several countries these were printed out into a paper format.

The round of interviews took place during organisational meetings, for example during the RYE Summer Seminar held in Austria or during the MIJARC seminar held in Bourges in the summer 2005. This ther part of the survey gathered 36 interviews that had taken place before and more were to carry out during the Study Session.

Overall, a **number of 1491 questionnaires** were filled in **from 29 countries** throughout Europe representing many different types of rural youth organisations.

After a short open poll in the plenary, over half of the participants out of the room had completed the application, while about 10% did not hear about the questionnaire.

▪ **Interviews**

Currently 36 interviews have taken place and more are to be carried tout at this Double study session and later on.

They constitute a necessary complementary – qualitative analysis after the survey.

2 main features were tackled by the interviewees:

- the **participation**:

Many participants mentioned the reasons of young Europeans’ involvement in youth work activities; the nature of their interest in rural activities; the activities favouring youth participation in rural Europe; their interest and also needs in international activities ...

- the **“brain drain” – issues related with social cohesion**

The added value in rural life and the advantages – positive/negative aspects associated with life in rural areas were underlined by interviewees.

The youngsters especially underlined some concrete aspects:

- The “dormitory” effect as a sign of the brain drain (despite variations depending on origins), positive & negative aspects of life in rural communities
- The role of family and friends in their involvement;
- The stimulation through involvement in youth activities;
- The gaining of self-confidence and motivation through non-formal learning and during international meetings .

⁵ ii) What are the initiatives that favour the inclusion of young people living in rural areas? How to share practices and experiences? What could we develop together?

⁶ iii) What can we conclude out of the opinion expressed in the survey and during seminars? How to share the experience gained? What shall we recommend at local and European level ?

⁷ iv) What kind of activities should be promoted and supported to answer the recommendations?What can be the following steps in the different projects/on community level? Training courses, networking meetings, training boxes?...

- **Online survey** (*Appendix 5*)

Two-thirds of the participants were under 25 years old and mostly students (for 50% of them; farming not the main employer). Women participated as a higher percentage in all areas with a share of 65%.

The young people who answered the questionnaire have been splitted up between **5 approximative geographical areas:**

1. "Central Europe" (France, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands)
2. Anglo-saxons (Great-Britain, Scotland, Ireland, Iceland)
3. Eastern European (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia (Baltic countries), Russia, Ukraina, Bulgaria, Albania, Belarus, Yugoslavia);
4. Northern European Countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland)
5. Southern European (Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece).

The regions from where youngsters most participated in the questionnaire are the countries from the Center of Europe (50%).

Well behind come the so-called "Anglo-Saxons" countries (27%), Nordic countries (14%) and Eastern countries (6%). The Southern area participated much less with around 3% of the whole answers.

Some interesting figures concern:

- The activity of the participants:

Around half of the participants are students (most of them being members of rural youth organisations). Then the employees represent a share of 30% answers (both productive and services sector) and the category "Others" cover 10,60% of the answers. The farmers represent 6,24% from the total.

- the 'Brain drain' phenomena:

50% of the participants could imagine to leave the countryside due to the 3 main following reasons of high education, the search for job opportunities and a wish to travel.

- the social involvement of participants:

They are greatly involved socially within their organisations, as 40% devote & to 3 hours/week for associative activities, 40 % between 3-9 hours and 12% more than 9 hours/week.

The main measures suggested for better living conditions and an improved participation concerned an increased consultation of young people in decision-making processes; more support for voluntary work, an improvement of transport opportunities and the promotion of youth-targeted information campaigns.

6. Outcomes of the group discussions

6.1. The 'Animals' groups

After the presentation, the participants were then called in different groups named after different names of animals and led by a team member (*Annex 6*).

They had to review and assess different graphs which were further results of the online survey focused on the activities in the leisure time, the time devoted to associative activities and their will and reasons to leave their village as well as 3 main things to change in their village and measures to be taken for young people to improve their participation in society.

The question was about: How do those further results reflect your own local, regional or country situation ?

Overall aim: To make participants discuss about the correlated issues but further, about the overall results and their opinions about them.

Their duty was to draft a small report about their group' findings and then to mail it to Isabelle Maras, the Project coordinator.

6.2. Sharing realities and perceptions about the graphs

The designed 'leaders' of the groups had then to present their findings in the plenary.

Most youngsters remarked that they were differences between countries but still common features coming out from their discussions.

The participants in the questionnaire were mostly members of both organisations, and it can have had an influence on the results.

(Some of them asked for more informations about the survey and correlated data).

On the basis of the additional graphs, the main findings of the 'animal groups' discussions were the following:

- Need for more means for participation: places to meet, recognition, more information for youngsters, being more consulted by government or political bodies, etc.
- Issues of unemployment or the lack of jobs but also housing:
- Difficulties related to settlement in the villages: many just settled a while and go back to towns, many only "commute" and just sleep in rural areas; many others wish to settle (after they studied in towns, etc.) but cannot find either jobs or house to buy or rent and are "forced away".
- Importance of their associative involvement: mainly the time spent in their organisation.

6.3. Working groups on focused themes

Different boards had been set by the doors of the plenary room the days before, so that the participants could pre-decide and indicate in which WG they would like to be in.

There are four set of issues which were taken from the 2001 Recommendations on the Situation and prospects of young people in rural areas (Assembly of the Council of Europe) & a fifth option was left open for the participants.

The topics of the 4 Workshops were finally about:

- 1. Employment
- 2. Education – Formal and non-formal
- 3. Leisure time
- 4. Mobility & How to attract young out with agriculture, to rural organisations (combined group).

On the first day, the working groups worked alone on their topic.

Each WG was finally expected to present its findings to the plenary on Wednesday 29th.

The groups typed up short reports to be sent to Gilbert Küpper, European Secretary of MIJARC Europe. Talk guests were expected to receive them while being at the EYCB.

STEP 1

The WG all started with the same procedure (on the basis of the Gilbert's recapitulative form (*Appendix 7*)).

- What are the needs ?

- What are the problems ?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses in my own region ?
- What is participation ? What does it mean for us ? What is done concerning our topic ?
- What are the solutions/best practices ?

STEP 2

Exchange on the topic within the Working group

- What is similar/different ?
- What are the solutions ? Collection of best practice examples.

At local/national/European levels.

STEP 3

Preparation of the presentation for the plenary.

STEP 4

Presentation by each working group of its results to the plenary. Reactions and debate.

7. Resources used

Texts

White paper on Youth policy (2001);

Recommendation 1530 on the Situation and prospects of young people in rural areas (2001)
- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (2003) - Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe

Symposium Report “ Youth participation in Rural development” (1998) by Rural Youth Europe - MIJARC Europe – CEJA - European Youth Centre (Strasbourg)

Websites

Project website: <http://www.change-the-village.org/>

Council of Europe/DG Youth and Sport/European Youth Center

“Covenant” with the European Commission: www.training-youth.net

Wednesday 29th March 2006

1. Title of the session

- Follow-up of the Working groups (preparation of their presentations, presentations in the plenary)
- Preparation of the Talk-show - debate
- Free time in town
- International buffet

2. Objectives

- To agree on and present their findings by the working groups in the plenary in the appropriate way, to write a short report about them to be sent to Gilbert and to be transmitted to the Talk-show participants

- Discuss and question the results of the WG obtained
- To learn and acquire technics on how to present the expectations and ideas and express them to decision-makers in order to make them heard
- To get awareness on the panel participants' background
- To learn elements on what is important when one wishes to address political leaders
- To discover further characteristics of the other participants' culture through the presentation of their countries' specialities and exchange on this topic

3. Programme

The programme started with the follow up of the Working groups which had begun the day before. The participants prepared their presentations and then each group held their findings in front of the other youngsters in the plenary.

In the afternoon, the preparation of the Debate - Talk-show made by Antje Rothemund, the EYCB Director, took place: she presented the important issues to be aware of and useful means for participants to feel more self-confident in addressing political decision-makers.

The day was concluded with Re-group meetings.

4. Educational methods used

- Energizers
- Written feed-backs of the Working groups.
- The participants had the opportunity to learn about the panel participants' background and the characteristics and global functioning of the main EU institutions, as well as about technics of expression.

5. Thematic Presentations/Discussions or inputs

5.1. Working groups presentations (Group discussions)

On the basis of the first results and discussions and prior to the Round table debate gathering political leaders and experts, four Working Groups were constituted and worked on different themes:

- 1) Formal and Non-formal education,
- 2) Employment,
- 3) Leisure time,
- 4) Combined group on mobility and how to attract youth with agriculture/to rural organisations.

Then the groups collectively presented their group's findings in the plenary room.

5.2. Talk show briefing & Background

As for the Briefing before the Talk-Show, It was explained to the participants how they had already looked at the problems and for which reasons since the beginning of the Study session.

In the afternoon, it was looked further how the issues could be improved and with which appropriate interlocutor.

The session leader Antje carried out a little quiz by a show of hands by asking the following questions:

- Who has already met an MP, an MEP ?
- Who has already raised funds for her/his organisation ?
- Etc.

The Session leader insisted on the fact that it was not expected from the participants to have the same experience, backgrounds and knowledge.

Aim of the preparation: To get the participants speaking to the right guest.

The participants were therefore explained the background of each of them and the institution or organisation they came from (*Appendix 8*).

Thus the participants knew whom to address in the debate so that they can feel more self-confident and the panel participants can help them effectively/in an effective manner with their questions and projects.

The topics for the Talk show - debate were mentioned:

- 1) How to stop the brain-drain in rural areas ?
- 2) How can rural young people best participate in decision-making processes ?

Some useful words and expressions were also defined for the debate:

Ex.: participation, brain drain, decision-making process.

Then the preconditions for participation in decision-making in a democratic society were reviewed:

1. Motivation - It is a positive thing, can be a synonym for fun and serve their purpose;
2. Resources & Structures - As not all parts of society have the resources and structures to empower their members;
3. Access – Youngsters can have the best structure but cannot get “there”, at a political level;
4. Competence & Knowledge – A successful and useful participation is needed.

As all of these important words comply to other people of society, the state structures need to have all these points. This model can therefore be replicated at a local level.

Participants showed themselves very eager to exchange with the panel guests about their realities and work. They were looking forward to get to know them and discuss with them during the Talk Show.

5.3. International Buffet

In the evening, the International Buffet took place: on this occasion, each participant had been briefed by their organisations to bring specialities from their area and to wear national dresses or costumes if possible.

Therefore many participants wore typical suits and costumes and the specialities were varied from different types of meat, bread, salad to bakeries, cakes, chocolate and different types of beers and alcohol. The way each group of participants presented their specialities and ate them was somewhat different or on the contrary very similar between countries.

Everyone had the chance to ask many questions about food and eating in foreign countries, which are in general one of the most important cultural features !

6. Results and recommendations from the Working groups

Collectively, the groups put together their findings. They started to realise how hard it is to gather information and to appreciate the differences in every country.

The main problems pointed out by the youngsters were:

- *Employment* (lack of jobs, job insecurity, new job opportunities and businesses in the countryside)
- *Education* (educational system, training of teachers, young leaders, studies opportunities, recognition of non-formal education, educational means and environment)
- *Brain drain/ Come back* towards and from urban areas (“Migration/Immigration” phenomena, difficulties to live in towns, to come back afterwards, to settle in rural areas, etc.)
- *Housing* (high prices and speculation, problems to settle, find a piece of land, proper accommodation, etc.)
- *Financial needs* (for rural youth organisations, for the educational system, to set up projects, etc.)
- *Information* (lack of information about funding, studies, youth-related opportunities)
- *Mobility* (transport, but also Internet access to a certain extent, infrastructure, etc.)
- *Image/Status* (lack of awareness concerning rural youth conditions amongst urban society, lack of recognition, lack of motivation and interest among youngsters)

EMPLOYMENT

The participants expressed their need for a phase of diagnostic in order to ensure the relevance of the actions.

PROBLEMS

- *High unemployment rate among youngsters* in rural areas (people are unable to find a job related to their skills and education, for instance there may be a shortage of teaching jobs.) Hence it causes *underemployment*.
- *Job insecurity* (only short term, temporary and seasonal work markets available): there is no longer a job for the whole life.
- *Corruption*, which causes lack of investments in industry and agriculture, is a problem for certain countries.
- *Migration* (Brain drain from villages to cities and from a country to somewhere abroad). & *Immigration of people* who are working in urban areas and do not take part in the social life of the villages are buying houses and properties which causes financial speculation and high rises in prices for living.
- *Industrialization*: Lack of work linked to the increasing number of machines (technical progress)
- *Free trade and liberalization* (Necessity to think about the consequences of globalization for instance)
- *Lack of awareness concerning rural youth conditions amongst urban society*. People who benefit from the social security (for ex. unemployment grants or family allocations) shall be helped to find a new job. These grants must not keep the people in a passive attitude that can lead to social exclusion.

Hence MAIN NEEDS

- *Prospects of work and development of the rural territories for the future.* (sustainable agriculture, development of agricultural jobs but also related activities; promotion of supports, notably financial ones).
- Need of *assistance for skills training* for young people in rural areas for instance They need to exchange their experiences and to elaborate their own projects.
- Youngsters need *recognition and respect for them choosing a rural life or/and an agricultural work*, from the government and more generally from the society.

SOLUTIONS AND EXAMPLES

The following solutions and examples have been therefore proposed by youngsters:

- An improvement of the employment could occur by *encouraging a sustainable agriculture, developing agricultural jobs* but also *the activities that are depending* on that field.
Promotion of local products in rural areas, (food sovereignty, economical cooperation, sustainable development)
An inter-regional cooperation between villages to find a balance between strengths and weaknesses on a territory (concerning employment).
- To *promote supports* (especially financial supports) that enable people to create sustainable economical activities.
Micro-credits to enable people to start their own business or to sustain them.
 - To make the area more attractive for investors
 - To encourage local enterpriseIncentives to come back to work for social help beneficiaries.
To promote national resources
- *Youth organizations* could be used as an information point and could provide skills training and workshops:
For instance, career advice on how to find a job/ how to prepare for interviews, CV's, etc.
More local groups with concrete projects to include rural youth in the social life.
- *As for settling farms*: Enable young people to settle in farms by providing incentives.
Such as cheaper land and subsidies for seeds and fertilizers.
- *Special or specific financial offers*:
Less tax announcements;
More specific offers to attract business firms on rural areas.

LEISURE TIME

For the participants, leisure is not only fun, it also means communication and socialisation. That's why they consider the role of rural and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) concerning leisure time as important.

PROBLEMS

Concerning the problems, the participants chose to review them by using key-words and their description.

- *Lack of recognition*
The government does not understand the importance of rural organisations.
Rural life is not popular among youngsters.
- *Bad infrastructure and lack of information*
Bad connection between local areas and cities, not enough facilities for using PC and Internet (Link with discrepancies/differences between countries).
- *Lack of motivation and interest*
Young people are not motivated for participation in NGO's. Some of them prefer harmful activities (drinking, smoking).
They prefer that somebody else do something for them instead of doing it themselves (passivity).
- *Regulation*
There are regulations that might be difficult to understand when we try to organise events (for instance governmental barriers)
- *Lack of opportunities*
Youngsters do not have enough opportunities to influence the policy in their local areas, there are not also enough activities for them.
- *Lack of money*
Lack of support for rural organisations.

Hence NEEDS

- Information
- Socialization
- Communication
- Fun
- Place and material Integration
- Support Leaders

SOLUTIONS and BEST PRACTICES

- *Lack of recognition*
Local organisations should promote their image through charity etc.
The projects should be interesting and attractive (ex.: camps, sport activities and so on)
National campaigns to promote image of rural life
Recommendations for national organisations and governments
- *Bad infrastructure & Lack of information*
Local governments should
Improve public transport (e.g. arrange more bus),
to provide more media access

National governments may find subsidies for this case in Europe
Europe can give subsidies to national governments

- *Lack of motivation and interest*
Local organisations should show good examples for youngsters who are not involved in activities.
Local organisation should provide the flow of information.
National governments and organisations should
 - provide and support local projects
 - provide the means for making websitesStudies and sessions for organisation leaders
European sessions are the platform for sharing experiences
- *Too complex regulation*
Regulation should be
 - clearer
 - made easier
 - or explained better
- *Lack of opportunities*
Trainings, seminars, study sessions to improve knowledge of youngsters so that they can really influence the social and economic processes in a region.
Media access (notably to more information)

EDUCATION – FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL

1. NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

- *Place/lack of meeting places for Non-Formal Education*

NEEDS

- Equipement/libraries, internet...
- Transport can be synonym of barrier: young people cannot get to the places (See comments and graphs about “Leisure time”).

SOLUTIONS AND EXAMPLES

- To open schools and community building/facilities to NGOs;
- ‘Brainwashing’ of mayors: in order to convince them of the importance of youth work/meetings.

- *Financial support*

NEEDS

- Possibility to apply for grants (awareness, knowledge, information about those fundings) – at all levels
- Financing networks at European/National levels

SOLUTIONS AND EXAMPLES

- Support of youth initiatives by the Gouvernement, local councils/businesses/sponsors;
- Administrative grants/ for the management of an NGO and the setting up of projects;

- Cooperation between organisations in sharing information (e.g. training on fundraising) on grants/sponsors.

- *Lack of leaders*

NEEDS

- Of trainers with experience, expertise, knowledge, skills;
- Willing/motivated/committed to take over responsibility (lack of time besides work/school; time off for taking part in trainings, etc.)

SOLUTIONS AND EXAMPLES

- Training for youth leaders/ financial support for courses
- Handbook for young leaders (practical approach: for treasurers, Public Relations person, chairman...)
- Time off for voluntary work
- Credit system for voluntary work

- *Recognition of Non-Formal Education*

SOLUTIONS AND EXAMPLES

- Promotion of positive Public Relations/campaigns raising awareness
- Credits (at university or schools)
- Recognition by future employers (of voluntary work done within a rural youth organisation)
- Collective recognition (by governments, institutions, when policy-making concerning laws/policies occurs)

2. FORMAL EDUCATION

- *Schools*

PROBLEMS/NEEDS

- Size of classes (different levels in the same class in rural areas / sometimes 5 years with the same teacher / important to experience different learning methods)
- How to take into account the 'rural' environment, learn about it, put knowledge into practice at local level .
- Libraries, internet: Practical opening hours also for local population
- Information on drugs, health-related issues, .etc.

SOLUTIONS AND EXAMPLES

- Co-operation between village schools: in order to save costs; E.g. Sharing the time of teachers
- The *teachers* must be competent and specialized, with social competencies and pedagogical training.

NEEDS

- How to get the 'good teachers' back to rural areas after their education is completed (braindrain phenomena)

SOLUTIONS AND EXAMPLES

- Life-long training for teachers.

- *Access to university*

SOLUTIONS AND EXAMPLES

- Scholarships for students who are far away from home
- Free education for everybody
- Help or assistance to provide by youth organisations or government for those people: concern about the living conditions and the loneliness of rural youngsters having migrated to town.

- *Information / Professional orientation*

SOLUTIONS AND EXAMPLES

- To organise meetings with workers from outside within the school and making it part of the curriculum;
- Co-operation between schools/sharing teachers/experts.

COMBINED GROUP

1) Mobility

2) How to attract young out with agriculture, to rural organisations

1) MOBILITY

NEEDS

- *Transport:* Cheap and effective transport
- *Medicine:* Medical Centers
- *Internet:* To get faster internet
- *Housing:* To have house
- *Youth Club:* To be active and to spend leisure time effectively

PROBLEMS

- *Transport*

SOLUTIONS / BEST PRACTICES

- *Centers*
Opening of Informational And Educational Centers in the Rural Areas which includes followings:
 - Internet Access
 - Modern Library
 - Trainings, Seminars and etc
- *Clubs*
Opening of Youth Clubs
 - Celebrations
 - Competitions
 - Some events and etc.
- *Government*
Government should

- provide better transportation
- expand the opportunities of internet
- provide youngsters with houses
- and etc.
- *Awareness*
Informational Campaigns have to realize:
 - Youth Exchanges
 - Study Sessions
- *Access to the European Funds*
 - EYF and etc.

2) HOW TO ATTRACT YOUNG PEOPLE OUT WITH AGRICULTURE, TO RURAL YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

PROBLEMS

- *Mobility*: Lack of public transport to and from rural areas
- *Perception*: To change image from agriculture to life in rural communities
- *Peer pressure*: Not *cool* to be associated with farming organisations
- *Commitment*: Restrictions on available leisure time of youngsters
- *Money*: Memberships fees, and other expenses have to be paid for by parents
- *Education*: Rural youth forced to move to cities for higher education
- *Funding*: Increased access to Government funding for rural youth organisations

SOLUTIONS / BEST PRACTICES

- *Local*
To raise awareness of opportunities offered by youth movements, and to convince local council to support financially and promote.
- *National*
To recognise the importance of such organisations and provide a forum where their policies can be discussed and implemented where appropriate
- *European*
To lobby European Politicians to recognise the work of rural youth movements

7. Resources used

Texts

White paper on Youth policy - A new impetus for European youth (2001);
 Recommendation 1530 on the Situation and prospects of young people in rural areas (2001)
 - Assembly of the Council of Europe;
 Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (2003) - Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe;
 Symposium Report "Youth participation in Rural development" (1998) by Rural Youth Europe (formerly known as European Committee of Young Farmers and 4H Clubs), MIJARC Europe and CEJA. Council of Europe – European Youth Centre (Strasbourg)

Websites

Council of Europe/DG Youth and Sport/European Youth Center
 Youth programmes "Covenant" with the European Commission: www.training-youth.net

Thursday 30th March 2006

1. Title of the session

- Debate-Talk-show
- Free time followed by a dinner in town

2. Objectives

- To discuss essential topics (having already been tackled and prepared by the youngsters since the beginning of the Session) with a panel of decision-makers and experts of the rural areas
- To enable this panel to confront their ideas and positions in front of a young rural audience
- To give the floor to the young participants, to give them the chance to present their ideas and expectations to the decision-makers and to exchange with them
- To provide the participants with theoretical and practical experience on the topics of:
 - Youth participation
 - Brain drain in rural areas – related issues
 - Characteristics and functioning of political agendas in different institutions

3. Programme

In the plenary and in presence of the panel participants, the programme started with a short movie recalling the first days of the Study session (sketches from the activities, working groups, parties)

Then the Talk-show debate gathering different political leaders, members of organisations, farmers, civil servants and experts was held in two different parts in the morning: the first one focusing on the issue of the brain drain in rural areas, and the second on rural youth participation.

The afternoon was dedicated to free time in the town. In the evening, the participants were invited for a dinner altogether in the restaurant "Pocco Locco" in town.

4. Educational methods used

- Ice-breaking, getting-to-know each-other and team-building activities
- They had the opportunity to learn details about some EU and European programmes and how to apply to them (Leader + programme – Mrs Ortet; Germise programme – Mr Coupeau)

5. Thematic Discussions or inputs

A short movie (made by Indulis Sverns) was first presented, showing what the participants had already done in the Working sessions and how the 58 participants from 26 different countries had been working together.

Talk-show debate (*Appendices 8 and 9*)

There were four working languages: English, French, German and Russian.

In two different panels, the guests and experts had the occasion to discuss about the two following issues:

- 1. First panel: How to stop the brain-drain in rural areas ?
- 2. Second panel: How can rural young people best PARTICIPATE in decision-making processes ? “

Each Talk-Show consisted of 45 minutes discussion among the panellists followed by 45 minutes of question time for the 70 participants / young people present at the Study session.

5.1. First part of the Talk Show: “How to stop the brain drain in rural areas ?”

Panellists in the Talk-Show:

- **Agnes Schierhuber:** MEP, European Parliament - Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (Austria)
- **Daniel Goulet:** Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; Chairman of Sub-Committee on Agriculture and Food (France)
- **József Marticsek:** agricultural engineer, farmer, expert on rural development / policies, advisor for young farmers (Hungary)
- **Ludvig Hubendick:** Sustainable Development Policy Officer - European Youth Forum (Sweden)
- **Hervé Coupeau:** member of CEJA; representative of the Economic and Social Committee (France)
- **Agnès Rousseau:** Board member of MIJARC Europe (France)
- **Franz Fensl:** Chairman of Rural Youth Europe (Austria)

Moderation: **Antje Rothmund** – Director EYCB / Council of Europe

Mrs Antje Rothmund, EYCB Director, first stated that youth policy issues in the countryside are in general well reflected in youth policy, but that they have no recognition in the field of agricultural policy and other economic-related fields. The main challenge is an enlarged access towards information in those fields.

Therefore the leading questions were:

How to keep young people in the countryside in order to help sustainable development ?

How to take into account the youngsters’ concerns to prevent this brain drain ?

5.2. Second part: “How can rural young people best participate in decision-making processes ?”

Panellists in the Talk-Show:

- **Ester Hortet:** Policy officer - Rural development consistency / European Commission, DG Agriculture (Brussels - Belgium)
- **John Dupraz:** Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; (Switzerland)
- **Bernadette Maras:** innovative farmer (France)
- **Attila Kovács:** Ministry of Agriculture (Hungary)
- **Heini Ynnilä:** board member of Rural Youth Europe (Finland)
- **Christian Schärtl:** board member of MIJARC Europe (Germany)

Moderation: **Mario D’Agostino** (Educational advisor – Pool of trainers/Council of Europe)

The main questions asked to the panel participants were:

How are we going to create the conditions for participation in order to promote youth participation ?

Then, what will you concretely do to create more opportunities ? What actions are you going to commit in for the youngsters ?

5.3. Topics addressed during the panels and the open debates with the participants

The panel participants brought many relevant elements to the debate related to the topics of brain drain and means to prevent it, hence employment, agriculture as well as to participation in all its dimensions.

The main topics discussed were:

- The necessity and need for concrete actions and not only words (personal examples)
- The topic of unemployment in the countryside
- The importance of cooperation and sharing (between rural youth organisations and their members, between youngsters/youth org. and political leaders)
- The notion of motivation and local political involvement and the necessity for the youngsters to “take the floor”
- Different aspects related to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP – European Commission) and farming (type of production, compensations and incentives)
- Different aspects concerning countries outside the EU (Russia, countries from the Balkans)

6. Recommendations – concrete commitments

At the end of the debate, the participants of the panel were finally asked for concrete commitments and recommendations in order to help young people support their rural area and promote their activities at political level.

- Mr Daniel Goulet, French parliamentary of the Council of Europe Assembly, engaged itself to make rural youth be better heard during the future meetings related to rural development in the CoE.
- Mrs Ester Hortet, from the European Commission, explained that it was the first time she participated in such a meeting. She underlined her will to have the largest dialogue possible with the young participants and to help them enlarge the possibilities in name of the EU Commission.
- Mr Attila Kovács, representative of the Hungarian Ministry for Agriculture underlined the Ministry would make a roadshow and set up Leader + projects. In addition, he proposed his help to hire trainees.
- Mrs Bernadette Maras, French innovative farmer in Southeastern France, underlined the fact that youngsters must push out older people so that they can get representation. In that regard, informal travel plays an important role: the European Union framework is not that formal as such.
- Mr John Dupraz, Swiss Parliamentary of the CoE Assembly, stated that youth groups should not be a ghetto: it is up to the participants to emerge with a clear definition of their needs. In that sense, youth organisations must be a bridge to social life and society.

7. Resources used

Texts

Basic documents for the participants (*Appendix 4*)

Background for Talk-show guests (*Appendix 9*)

Background on EU institutions (*Appendix 8*)

Websites:

Council of Europe/DG Youth and Sport/European Youth Center

“Covenant” with the European Commission: www.training-youth.net

Project website: <http://www.change-the-village.org/>

Gateway to the European Union: http://europa.eu/index_en.htm

European Parliament: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/>

European Commission: <http://ec.europa.eu/>

European Social and Economic Committee: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/>

Friday 1st April 2006

1. Title of the session

- Local visit of a project on the Hungarian countryside (Zamoly – Tele-cottage)
- Follow-up of the debate
- Presentation of Best Practices (How to put them in practice ?)

2. Objectives

- To give a concrete ‘best practice’ example to the participants
- To enable the participants to give their feed-back on the Round table - debate

3. Programme

The programme started with the visit to the local project and a lunch taken in the village of Zamoly.

The programme went later on in the afternoon with the follow-up of the Study Session by the participants.

The activities of the Social Committee were announced and some participants made some propositions for the evening (quiet time together to reflect on this week spent together, etc.).

The young participants then met within their Re-groups.

After dinner, some Best practices were presented by participants in different rooms of the EYCB.

4. Educational methods used

- Concrete visit of a country-wide Hungarian project led in rural areas (the ‘Tele cottages’ network).
- Presentations done by the participants of their own experiences and initiatives (implementation, results for possible replication)

5. Thematic Discussions or inputs

5.1. Visit of the local project : the 'Telecottages' in the village of Zámoly (*Appendix 10*)

The participants were separated in two groups and visited two buildings belonging to the "Tele Cottage" network.

In the village of Zámoly, Mr Menyhárt István, the local 'Tele cottage' leader, introduced the project.

The Tele-cottages were created in 1994 in order to bring the digital culture from the cities to the countryside and thus originally provided internet-related services. Since then, the network has been expanding and activities of information and research (by instance, a recent alternative local radio praised by youngsters) were then launched.

There are currently around 500 Tele Cottages with polyvalent activities throughout Hungary. Given notably the brain drain phenomena and the growing number of elderly people who need support, those structures tend increasingly to foster rural development and to provide a wide range of social services in rural areas.

Depending on their location, the Tele cottages may thus focus on social work, cultural events or youth and rural programmes (Leader + for ex.). They also cooperate with local entrepreneurs and foreign partners, and try to promote cultural events.

Answering a participant's question, Mr Menyhárt István underlined that the association was performing indeed public tasks and was currently in the phase of negotiating at regional level of what could be the IT functions but also the social or cultural duties carried out by the Tele Cottage in the long run.

5.2. Short introduction of the Best practices' presentations held in the evening

The short presentations of the evening were presented by some participants. They were expected to function on a flexible basis: each participant would be free to pass from one group to another one to benefit from the different experiences.

Bernadette Maras would like to speak about her experience of the rebuilding of a village with her husband and other young couples. Originally a daughter of farmers, she settled in another region after her studies and practiced biological agriculture with her husband. In addition, she wanted to bring up her family and establish a social life in her village. She wished to exchange on the life of young farmers and its challenges.

Christine Hope wanted to share her experience of founding of a business (grocery). Her original idea was to open a village shop: it took her 3 weeks to open her business. She worked 70-80 hours/week of work during the first year. She used the following motto: Plan, Act, Do and Review.

Mike Shaw wanted to explain his experience of settlement as a farmer. He was born and brought up in a city, but wasn't happy to work in the industry. In 1999, he undertook an internship on a farm. He then joined the Young Farmers Clubs and bought a car in october 2005. He would like to manage my own farm: he is not interested by money but by the living environment and conditions. For several months, he has been working with a farmer who enables him to use his machinery and his infrastructure without any renting. Mike underlined that the farmers have been very cooperative and helpful with him.

George Dixon Fernandez was willing to share stories of people doing best practices in Asia, Africa.

Karolin Kanabus was willing to share her experience of implementation of her project, supported by the Youth programme of the DJ Youth/EC (Action 4: Voluntary service ??).

6. Outcomes and Recommendations of the discussion held in plenary

Follow-up of the Talk Show-debate

Participants were asked to give their feelings and what they had learnt and gained from the debate. The main elements which came out were:

- The Talk show very interesting, as the speakers completed each other.
- There was too much focus on agricultural issues, even if they do not concern the majority of young people.
- The question : How to stop the brain drain ? remained partially answered by the speakers.
- Several participants found that they could not participate in the debate because of the limited time allocated to debate.
- Other young people considered that it was good to give the participants the occasion to participate.
- Too few things came out of the debate: the discourse was very consensual and did not reflect the exchanges time that the participants had before.
- It was nevertheless interesting and quite successful to give to see the research's impact, as the debate's objective was to have an exchange with the panels, but also to get out of the configuration of this seminar in order to have a form of public impact.
- Speakers could raise certain challenges and debates, even they could not give some answers.

Summing up the overall impressions, Agnès, member of the Preparatory team, underlined that the objective was to establish political cooperations, some bridges. After the debate, the speakers were willing to stay with the participants to talk and to stay in contact. That's why this Talk-Show was quite successful, even if the debate was too short, with a big number of speakers. It was difficult to transmit the whole thoughts spent during the previous days in a few minutes.

7. Resources used

Websites:

Council of Europe/DG Youth and Sport/European Youth Center
Youth programmes/Covenant

Further website

Project website: zamoly@telehaz.hu (contact Mr Menyhárt István)
Village of Zámoly: www.zamoly.hu

Saturday 1st April 2006

1. Title of the session

- Follow-up on all levels (work on recommendations)
- Evaluation on all levels
- Farewell party

2. Objectives

- To ensure a continuation of the topic of rural youth participation which had been addressed during the Study session
- To motivate participants and youth leaders to organise activities and set up projects to promote dissemination of information, best practices, activities promoting the involvement of youngsters, etc.
- To reflect upon participants' personal learning experience of the seminar and their own future work and achievements

3. Programme

Upon getting energized, participants continued to work on their Personal action plans. In addition, the youngsters presented their view upon the week spent together through sketches (for example highlights on some popular participants, on the bus breakdown in the Hungarian countryside, etc...).

The afternoon was then dedicated to the follow-up as well as to the overall evaluation of the Study session.

Upon having the last Re-group meeting, the course was closed in Plenary, after a common 'brainstorming' about the participants' feelings about the week.

In the evening, a party gathering all participants was organised: after having watched the movie made on the Study session, they could play games, dance, sing and have fun together.

4. Educational methods used

- Buzz groups (work on recommendations)
- Presentations in plenary (elaboration of sketches as creative presentation of the highlights of the week from the pax' perspective)
- Evaluation of the expectations and fears
- Overall evaluation of the Study Session
- Evaluation forms filled by the participants about the Study Session
- "Letter to myself" (personal motivational letters written by all participants)
- Individual Project plans (individual projects or initiatives to be carried on by the participants when back home)

5. Thematic Discussions or inputs

5.1. Elaboration of Personal Action Plans

Before the lunch, the participants were invited to complete a Personal Action Plan (project plan) in order to describe a project that was ongoing or originated in their minds during the Session and in order to show the way they imagine to participate. The young people were asked to describe their project in 3-4 steps with the actors which could be involved. The project could focus about any theme (a real practical achievement/ a meeting in your club/ or a long term project in a community), it should only make sense for themselves.

After the lunch break, some participants expressed the ideas they developed.

A participant proposed to organise a week-end where rural organisations of his areas could discuss of the issues which affect them. Two young people explained that they planned to

send an “open letter” to newspapers and political decision-makers to focus on the youth in their country, which would recall what had been discussed during the week: they felt that it was necessary to work together at European level. A young woman wished to organise a center for human rights in her local school: it would be a regional-supported project and would gather pupils, teachers and parents.

5.2. Networking and Follow-up

The Secretary General continued by outlining the following steps in order to follow-up the study session.

Support for projects

- Following the Double Study session, a letter will be sent to the President of the Committee of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Council of Europe as well as to the four Presidents of the Sub-Committees in copy.

- The final statement drafted by the participants (reviewed recommendations) will be attached with the letters to the CoE political leaders.

- These reviewed recommendations will be also sent to the Round-table participants and to the young participants to the Session.

The information will be distributed as follows:

- All organisations which are members of Rural Youth Europe and MIJARC Europe (as well as observer organisations) will receive information.

- Information will be placed on the “Change the village, Challenge yourself !” project website as well as on the Rural Youth Europe and MIJARC Europe websites.

- During the Study Sessions, a list of individual contacts has been compiled so that the participants can keep in touch and reach their respective organisations in the future.

- During the Study Session, it was recommended to compile best practice examples so that they can be gathered in the framework of the ‘Change the village, Challenge yourself!’ project for further dissemination and as part of the overall study on rural youth participation in Europe.

- Maintain a regular contact with MIJARC Europe, Rural Youth Europe and the “Change the village” project coordinator by sending in photographs, articles and updates on the projects led by the youngsters’ organisations.

Follow-up to this Study Session

Each of the participants was invited to write a ‘**Letter to themselves**’ detailing their hopes and aspirations following the completion of the Study session. Within this letter they were asked to outline their thought process to allow them to complete their projects when they return home to their own organisation. The ‘Letters to myself’ will remain at the offices of Rural Youth Europe and MIJARC Europe for a period of about three months after which it will be posted back to each of the participants.

Each participant was also asked to fill an **Evaluation Questionnaire** (*Appendix 11*) on the whole session to include a reflection on what they learnt and will bring back home after the Session, their interpretation of the Study session and how it will influence their lives in the future.

Those Personal Action Plans were given back to them immediately after the Session. The idea behind is that participants can review their projects of achievement in their rural areas and examine whether they are in relation with what they outlined in the seminar.

Common activities of Rural Youth Europe & MIJARC Europe in 2006

Spring seminar “Change the village - Challenge yourself? You(th) make a difference!”

Double Study Session at the EYC Budapest; this seminar is part of a range of activities organised in co-operation with MIJARC Europe (European Catholic Rural Youth) in the framework of the Study-Pilot project “Change the village – Challenge yourself!” – about the situation, needs and ways to participate of rural youth all over Europe.

Activities of Rural Youth Europe in 2006

European Rally “Pearls in contrast – multicultural aspects in rural youth” To be held in Saulkrasti, Latvia (15-22 July 2006).

Autumn seminar “Breaking the barriers” To be held in Cardiff, United-Kingdom (15-22 October). This seminar will follow-up this Study session and deal with discrimination between rural youth and city youth, people with fewer opportunities, etc; this activity will take place in the city centre of Cardiff (Wales) where rural youth participants will be actively working with city youth and also get in contact with refugees, migrants, drug addicts, etc.

More information can be obtained from the following websites:

- “Change the village – Challenge yourself!” project website: www.change-the-village.org
- Rural Youth Europe: www.ruralyouth europe.com
- MIJARC Europe: www.mijarc.info

Activities of MIJARC Europe in 2006

MIJARC Working groups, held in Brussels, Belgium (12-14 May 2006)

General Assembly of MIJARC Europe, to be held in Ribamar, Portugal (16-19 June 2006).

6. Recommendations and outcomes of group discussion

6.1. Evaluation of the Double Study Session 2006

This entailed:

- A review with sketches of the highlights of the week by the participants
- Visual reflection of participants on the Objectives/Expectations/Fears
- The individual completion of an attached evaluation form (See section 5.2.)

Highlights of the week by the participants

The young people first watched the movie in preparation about the Study Session. After having worked in small groups, the participants then presented small sketches showing the funny moments of the week: practical events occurred in the course of the Session or in the plenary, behavior of some of the participants, etc.

Visual reflection of participants on their expectations

The participants were first asked to form a large circle, according to the “dartboard” method. Then the facilitator Rob recall the primary objectives of the Session as well as the expectations and fears expressed at the beginning of the week (See the Daily Report for the Monday 27th March 2006).

All participants agreed on the fact that all the objectives had been achieved and that they had to overcome their fears during the session, except for the following items:

Expectations not met:

- To have interesting free times

Fears not overcome:

- To experience language problems (communication)
- To experience endless discussions

6.2. Reviewing of the former recommendations: Final statement (*Appendix 12*)

In order to have an overall synthesis of their common findings of the week, the participants were then asked to work in Buzz groups on the basis of the 2001 recommendations, in order to think about the propositions they would like to integrate in a Final statement.

Questions: Are the former recommendations still valid ? What could we modify or add ?

The issues tackled by the participants and the additions they advocated have been integrated in the former Recommendation 1530 (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe - 2001) on which they worked.

According to the remarks and propositions of the participants, the following inputs of the work led during the Study session were integrated:

- The importance to give a positive image of rural areas and of rural youth organisations
- To stress the issue of housing for young people in rural areas
- To care about the conservation and development of basic services in rural areas
- The importance of the transmission/dissemination of information towards young people on policies and thus existing funding programmes, etc.
- To help the young people to settle in the countryside (with micro-credits possibilities/grants/different financings)
- The importance to have a school in the area – anchoring in the place
- The great role of rural youth organisations in non-formal education and in the development of social skills and participation of the youngsters at all levels of the community

7. Evaluation, conclusion and follow-up

After having watched the movie in preparation, the participants were asked in Plenary to describe their feelings and what they had learnt. All had felt that the week was a success: mostly because they had gained a new motivation to undertake projects in their rural area and had learnt new approach and technics to present their ideas and expectations to decision-makers by instance. They also made many new friends, got to know many really committed youth leaders as well as potential partners for future events.

All participants thanked the team for their commitment, attention to them and the help and advice provided during this very successful seminar.

Some participants would have liked more focused working groups and more free time, as the schedule was rather hectic.

Sabine, the Secretary general of Rural Youth Europe, underlined the fact that it was important that the participants stay in touch with their organisations and disseminate their good practices.

Both the participants and group leaders therefore agreed that the seminar was an excellent experience and a great success.

Sabine closed the course by thanking everyone for their involvement and their participation as well as for their great support over the last 2 years and ½ . The closure of the Study

session was indeed a good occasion for her to say good-bye to everyone, as she was about to leave her functions shortly after the end of the session.

8. Resources used

Texts

Recommendation 1530 on the Situation and prospects of young people in rural areas (2001)
- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Websites

Rural Youth Europe: <http://www.ruralityoutheurope.com/>
MIJARC Europe: <http://www.mijarc.org/>

Study session
“ Change the Village Challenge Yourself – You(th) can Make a Difference”
MIJARC Europe - RYEurope

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

RURAL YOUTH EUROPE

Ms	ATSTUPENA	Gunita	Latvian Young Farmers' Club	LATVIA
Mr.	BÁBA	Miklós	Agricultural and Rural Youth Association - AGRYA	HUNGARY
Ms	DELGYANSKA	Neli	Agrarian Youth Union	BULGARIA
Mr.	DEMIRTSHYAN	Tigran	Armenian Rural Youth	ARMENIA
Mr.	DIRNENS	Valdis	Latvian Young Farmers' Club	LATVIA
Mr.	DOLAN	Thomas	Mulra Na Feirme	IRELAND
Ms	DOMASHEVSKAYA	Elena	Russian Union of Youth	RUSSIA
Ms	ELMGREN	Marie	Finnish Swedish 4H	FINLAND
Ms	GEYER	Rosi	Bund der Deutschen Landjugend - BDL	GERMANY
Mr.	GROSSFELD	Rudolf	Bund der Deutschen Landjugend - BDL	GERMANY
Mr.	HANSER	Andrea	Bund der Deutschen Landjugend	GERMANY
Ms	JOVANOVIK	Ivana	Inter-Ethnic Project of Kumanovo	
			THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA	
Ms	KAJOKAITÉ	Kristina	Lithuanian Young Farmers Circles Union	LITHUANIA
Ms	KANABUS	Karolina	Organisation for Development of Rural Areas	
				POLAND
Ms	KARNER	Janja	Zveza Slovenske	SLOVENIA
Ms	KOLGA	Helena	Estonian 4H	ESTONIA
Ms	KUZMA	Ieva	Latvian Young Farmers' Club	LATVIA
Ms	MACGRUER	Fiona	Scottish Association of Young Farmers Club	
				UNITED KINGDOM
Mr.	MAMMADOV	Shahlar	The Social and Psychological Rehabilitation Centre for Youth 'Dirchelish'	AZERBAIJAN
Ms	MEIER	Katharina	Austrian Rural Youth	AUSTRIA
Ms	NÄKKI	Laura	Finnish 4H	FINLAND
Ms	O'GORMAN	Florence	Moerei Na Ierime	IRELAND
Ms	SARIN	Linda	Finlands Svenska 4H	FINLAND
Mr.	SHAW	Mike	National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs	
				UNITED KINGDOM
Ms	SØRUM	Ellen Johanne	Norwegian 4H	NORWAY
Mr.	STEVENSON	Andrew	Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs	
				UNITED KINGDOM
Ms	TASEVSKA	Frosina	Inter-Ethnic Project of Kumanovo	
			THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA	
Mr.	THOMPSON	Geoff	National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs	
				UNITED KINGDOM
Ms	TILLI	Saara	Finnish 4H	FINLAND

MIJARC EUROPE

Mr.	AAKSTER	Laurens	APJW	THE NETHERLANDS
Mr.	AHMADOV	Rahman	GN Information Society	AZERBAIJAN
Ms	BONNEAU	Lara	MRJC	FRANCE
Ms	CHYLA	Paulina	Education and Development (Edukacija I Roznó)	POLAND
Ms	EVANS	Joanne	Wales YFC Centre	UNITED KINGDOM
Ms	EVANS	Shan	Nia Wales Young Farmers Club	UNITED KINGDOM
Ms	GUNNARSSON	Frida	Swedish 4H	SWEDEN
Ms	FAY	Aline	MRJC	FRANCE
Mr.	FEHRENBACH	Stefan	KLJB	GERMANY

Mr.	FERNANDEZ	George Dixon	MIJARC International	BELGIUM
Mr.	KIRILOFF	Rossen Ivanov	NALFAP	BULGARIA
Ms	KOBRAS	Martina	KLJB BAYERN	GERMANY
Ms	KORZHOVA	Victoria	German Youth Association 'Jugendring'	RUSSIA
Ms	LEWANDOWSKA	Patrycja	Stowarzyszenie Edukacja i Rozwój	POLAND
Mr.	LONGAWA	Damian	Edukacja I Rozwój	POLAND
Ms	MARK	Leanne	Young Farmers Club Ulster	UNITED KINGDOM
Ms	McCALL	Joanne	Young Farmers' Club of Ulster	UNITED KINGDOM
Ms	MENGER	Daniela	KLJB Osnabrueck	GERMANY
Ms	NEZOU	Adeline	MRJC	FRANCE
Mr.	RUIZ DE GARIBAY	Daniel	Council of Europe	SPAIN
Mr.	SCHÄRTL	Christian	MIJARC Europe	GERMANY
Ms	SCHILLER	Johanna (Jojo)	KLJB Bayern	GERMANY
Mr.	TABURET	Étienne	MRJC	FRANCE
			Mouvement rural de jeunesse chrétienne	
Mr.	VAN MELLE	Robert	APJW	THE NETHERLANDS
Ms	VERKEST	Claire	MRJC	FRANCE
Ms	VOLLENMEIDER	Petra	Swedish 4H	SWEDEN
Ms	WALDORF	Natacha	MRJC	FRANCE

PREPARATION TEAM

Mr.	FENSL	Franz	Rural Youth Europe	AUSTRIA
Mr.	GOVAERTS	Rob	KLJ	BELGIUM
Ms	HOPE	Christine	National Federation of Young Farmers' Club	UNITED KINGDOM
Ms	KAUNISKANGAS	Eija	Rural Youth Europe	FINLAND
Ms	KLOCKER	Sabine	Rural Youth Europe	AUSTRIA
Mr.	KÜPPER	Gilbert	MIJARC Europe	BELGIUM
Ms	MARAS	Isabelle	MIJARC Europe – RYEurope	BELGIUM
			Project coordinator 'Change the Village - Challenge yourself!'	
Ms	WEHRLE	Elisabeth	KLJB	GERMANY
Ms	YNNILÄ	Heini	Rural Youth Europe	FINLAND
Ms	ROUSSEAU	Agnès	MRJC	FRANCE

LECTURERS

Ms	MARAS	Bernadette		FRANCE
Mr.	SVERNS	Indulis	Latvian Young Farmers' Club	LATVIA

ROUND TABLE PARTICIPANTS

Mr.	COUPEAU	Hervé	Comité Economique et Social (CESE)	FRANCE
Mr.	DUPRAZ	John	Conseil National Suisse	SUISSE
Mr.	GOULET	Daniel	Conseil de l'Europe	FRANCE
Ms	HORTET TARROJA	Ester	European Commission	BELGIUM
Mr.	HUBENDICK	Ludvig	European Youth Forum	BELGIUM
Mr.	KOVÁCS	Attila	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	HUNGARY
Ms	SCHIERHUBER	Agnès	European Parliament	AUSTRIA

EXTERNAL TRAINER

Mr.	D'AGOSTINO	Mario	External trainer	ITALY
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Ms	MOLNÁR	Zsuzsa	Adm. assistant - EYC Budapest (CoE)	HUNGARY
Ms	ROTHEMUND	Antje	Director of the EYC - Budapest (CoE)	HUNGARY
Ms	SCHNEIDER	Annette	Council of Europe - Pedagogic trainer	HUNGARY