



## Rebuilding the European Story

Report of the study session held by  
Rural Youth Europe and European Confederation of Youth  
Clubs

in co-operation with the  
European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Budapest  
4-11 May 2014

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 view of the Council of Europe.

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### **Rural Youth Europe**

Karjalankatu 2a, 00520 Helsinki, Finland  
tel: +358 452345629  
e-mail: [office@ruralyoutheurope.com](mailto:office@ruralyoutheurope.com)  
website: [www.ruralyoutheurope.com](http://www.ruralyoutheurope.com)

### **European Confederation of Youth Clubs**

Rue de Capucins 30, 1000 Brussels, Belgium  
tel.: + 32 479 63 35 77  
e-mail: [ecyc@fcjmp.be](mailto:ecyc@fcjmp.be)  
website: <http://www.ecyc.org>

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## Executive summary

The study session “Rebuilding the European Story” was organised by Rural Youth Europe (RYEurope) and European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC), in cooperation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, from 4-11 June 2014 at the European Youth Centre Budapest (EYCB). The theme was young people and European identity in relation to the changing world. The aim of the study session was to explore, share, and develop competences of storytelling as a tool for intercultural communication reassessing European identity among young people in the changing world.

The study session gathered 37 participants and team members from 14 countries covering a large geographical area of Europe (from Ireland to Azerbaijan). The participants were mainly in the age 18-25 years old and there were a few more females than males. More than half of the participants came from rural areas and small villages. The participants were NGO youth workers, volunteer leader, regular members, some board members and a few activists. Their experience of the study session theme was quite diverse.

The preparatory team consisted of:

- Pia Nurmio-Perälä, Finland, Secretary General at RYEurope, Course Director and preparation team member of study session
- Lukas Helfenstein, Switzerland, Vice-Chairperson of RYEurope, preparation team member at study session
- Eelin Hoffström, Estonia, trainer at RYEurope, preparation team member at study session
- Elena Lotrean, Romania, Chairperson of ECYC, preparation team member at study session
- Anca Popa, Romania, trainer at ECYC, preparation team member at study session
- Ragıp Zik, Turkey, Council of Europe Educational Advisor for the preparation team

The main issues of this study session were:

- Personal, national and European identity
- Construction of national stories and transfer of these stories from generation to generation
- Current challenges in Europe and how they affect young people’s lives
- Freedom of speech and hate speech
- Transferring learning of the study session to the participants’ organisations
- Further collaboration opportunities and examples from good practices around the world
- Addressing various forms of storytelling as a tool such as theatre, movie, news article, oral history etc.

The main outcome of the study session was that regular young people, who normally don’t work on the study session theme, got the understanding of how current European issues and their local reality are linked. They were introduced contemporary topics that affect young people’s lives all around Europe, such as racism and discrimination, minority rights, unemployment, mobility, and women’s. They had the chance to discuss these issues with their peers from different countries and backgrounds. Their experience from this study session affects also their community as many of them are multipliers in their organisation as youth workers or volunteer leaders.

A constant learning environment can also be considered as one of the most important outcomes of this event. Regardless of being in or out of a scheduled session, participants took the advantage of being surrounded by knowledge and experience of other people. Even without facilitation of the team, they set up possibilities for discussing and sharing experiences spontaneously.

For RYEurope, this study session was important because we could work on issues that are relevant to young people's lives on a large scale and usually neglected by our rural target group. Also, few of them had previously worked with storytelling method, and they were surprised how educational these methods can be and they were inspired to also use them in their home organisation. ECYC has been doing a lot of work on inclusion, human rights and hate speech, therefore this study session helped a lot seeing the theme on the agenda of so many people and also experience storytelling as an instrument that can really add value and be used in so many contexts.

RYEurope and ECYC have member organisations from various parts of Europe. This was enriching, as the participants of the study session mixed and got to know people from countries the organisations does not have participants at the own events.

Attached material about the study session Rebuilding the European Story can be found at the link: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/mchvs3fpibtsw1p/AADNhiUpWjxx3LLPB4TlalyFa>

## Introduction

The study session “Rebuilding the European Story” was organised by Rural Youth Europe (RYEurope) and European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC), in cooperation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, from 4-11 June 2014 at the European Youth Centre Budapest (EYCB). The theme was young people and European identity in relation to the changing world.

### **Aim and objectives**

The aim of the study session was to explore, share, and develop competences of storytelling as a tool for intercultural communication reassessing European identity among young people in the changing world.

The objectives were the following:

- o To identify young people’s major challenges in Europe with its current crisis along with the conflicts, and the changes it brings to our communities.
- o To encourage young people to take action in their local community.
- o To explore storytelling as a practical method for rebuilding European identity.
- o To introduce participants to the work of the council of Europe in relation to Human rights education and the No Hate Speech Movement.
- o To equip the participants with means for transferring the gained competences into their work with young people.

### **Profile of participants and team**

The study session gathered 37 participants and team members from 14 countries covering a large geographical area of Europe (from Ireland to Azerbaijan). The participants were mainly in the age 18-25 years old and there were a few more females than males. More than half of the participants came from rural areas and small villages. The participants were NGO youth workers, volunteer leader, regular members, some board members and a few activists. Their experience of the study session theme was quite diverse.

The selection of participants was done by RYEurope and ECYC separately. Candidates sent application forms and each organisation made the selection of their participants according to: experience on the theme, motivation to attend the study session, involvement in their organisation and possibility to multiply the learning points in their local context. Through the application forms we identified the needs of selected participants and could build and adapt the program accordingly. For the selection of participants, we took into consideration geographic, age and gender balance in order to improve the group dynamics.

24 of the applications came from the RYEurope member organisations and 4 from ECYC’s members. They met target group criteria and only one was outside the age group priority, but we had many applications from Finland so we chose to accept all others except for two applications from Finland. In addition, RYEurope received 17 applications from non-members that met the intended profile of participants. Out of these the successful candidates were selected for the rest of the places.

RYEurope and ECYC are European networks whose members come from various areas in Europe. Thanks to this diversity, we were able to invite people from different backgrounds. It contributed to richness of intercultural learning (as a transversal topic of the study session), to a better understanding of the culture of 'the other', to improve social and communication skills and also to interaction between different organisations across the Europe.

The preparatory team members had an interesting mix of cultural and work experience backgrounds. Several team members had experience of storytelling, which was the main method of the study session. They had also worked on themes related to the content, like European identity and intercultural communication. The experience was shared, methods exchanged and approaches discussed, all to make the most out of the training capacity of the team.

### **Main content and background of the theme**

What started as financial crisis a couple of years ago is permanently changing Europe in many ways. The young people face quite big challenges, as the youth unemployment rate is extremely high in many countries, education opportunities are limited and recourses for support are cut. When recession threatens life standards, people put their own needs first, which has led to for example rise of nationalism, increased social exclusion of vulnerable groups, discrimination and violence. A result is that human rights are more easily forgotten. This was the situation in Europe that gave the background to our study session "Rebuilding the European Story".

We did not go deeply into the problematic issues, but rather gave a background in order to understand the very every day of young people. A central issue for our study session, also a reality for Europe, was that even if more stability in economy can be expected sooner or later, Europe won't return to what we were used to. It will be a changed Europe. How should the young people of today contribute to building the future they want to see? How to motivate the European youth to work together on common problems while they experience financial hardship and barely dedicate time and effort for long-term concerns? How can they speak up about their opinion without offending the others?

Our approach to explore the current challenges in Europe was to work on intercultural communication and "(re)build" common values. This study session was a way for us to contribute to a more united Europe as a reaction against the splitting of trust that we can see around us in Europe right now.

The tool we chose to work with was storytelling, because it gave the participants concrete methods that are simple to transfer to their home environment. Storytelling is an excellent tool for turning complicated issues into plain language for young people. It is a tool that both RYEurope and ECYC have used as part of non-formal learning and something we wanted to spread among our member organisations to be used locally.

The main issues of this study session were:

- Personal, national and European identity
- Construction of national stories and transfer of these stories from generation to generation
- Current challenges in Europe and how they affect young people's lives
- Freedom of speech versus hate speech
- Transferring learning of the study session to the participants' organisations
- Addressing various forms of storytelling as a tool such as theatre, movie, news article, oral history etc.



The flow of the programme was as follows:

- Arrival day
  - o Arrivals, welcome, information and ice-breaking.
- Programme day 1
  - o Introduction, getting to know each other, hopes, fears and contributions, group building, introduction to identity concepts and storytelling
- Programme day 2
  - o Exploring current challenges in Europe and how they affect young people
- Programme day 3
  - o Introduction to national identity and the No Hate Speech Movement
- Programme day 4
  - o Puzzle pieces of European identity, free afternoon
- Programme day 5
  - o Preparation and practice of practical adoption
- Programme day 6
  - o Open space in relation to study session theme, evaluation
- Departure day
  - o Departure

The flow was developed so we had stages of:

- theme overview,
- deeper study,
- understanding of the European dimension,
- preparation of transference to local level,
- space to contribute, and
- evaluation.

First, the group shared realities and got a common understanding of the theme. This was the base to prepare participants to get familiar with the rise of nationalism and hate speech in Europe as well as the measures to fight with these such as the No Hate Speech Movement. As these issues are deeply rooted in the society they need to be considered at different levels including personal, national and international scales. We provided the participants the opportunity to reflect upon their experiences across these aspects.

One day each was dedicated to exploring personal, national and European identity. It went together with the general flow so that personal identity was part of sharing personal realities, national identity was related to conflicts between nations and hate speech towards groups and European identity was introduced by collecting common characteristics of heroes from all around Europe.

We paid attention to balancing topics of challenges and opportunities and to show the multiple perspectives on conflicts and solutions. Storytelling as a method gave the study session a red thread and provided practical methods that the participants could easily use when facilitating sessions at home. Introduction to storytelling was given on the first day, and was used each day in various formats.

The free afternoon was placed after several intense sessions, so it allowed the participants to relax and reflect on what they had learned. Rather than just talk about the new knowledge and skills gained, we used a full day in order for the participants try out transforming the outcomes and using them in a workshop format back at their local organisations. The open space gave a chance for the participants to select what additional learning they wanted to gain, or contribute with what they thought could be useful to others. The daily and final evaluation sessions provided us feedback and encouraged the participants to reflect on their learning at the same time.

There was a continuous group building process: Icebreaking and group building activities were held in the beginning of the week and enough space was left for the participants to take over the responsibility for contributing to group dynamics. During the sessions and evenings, the participants were encouraged to introduce indoor and outdoor activities including interactive games, discussions, movie screenings, and organising group entertainment activities.

## Programme

The study session programme took place in the EYCB building and in the yard outside. We used many different session formats to meet various learning styles and keep the programme interactive. A major part of the methods used were related to storytelling, alongside the other non-formal education methods. The sessions were facilitated by the team members and invited guests.

All team members were able to contribute in the planning of the study session, which helped to have a better understanding of the whole program and create a sense of a joint product. At the preparatory meeting, 6 weeks prior to the study session, the team adapted the application form content to their understanding of the theme and to the need of the target group. At that point most participant applications were received, so the study session could be adjusted to the participant's profile and needs based on the application. The division into urban and rural youth was certainly interesting, but we decided to keep it as a context rather than part of the theme. We established together the main vision of the study session by reviewing the aim and objectives. Based on this we built the daily programme and developed the session's contents. Then the tasks were shared and technical issues were discussed. Weeks before the study session the team members prepared detailed session plans and practical arrangements staying in constant contact. The final adjustments were made all together at EYCB the day before the study session started.

The schedule of the study session and the session plans are attached to this report. You can find the description and background of the programme for each day below. The schedule given to the participants can be found in appendix 1.

### **Arrival day**

The participants arrived along the day and evening, so the programme on the arrival day was limited to a short facilitated session after dinner to bring the group together and give information. We introduced the preparatory team, played a name game and a few ice-breaking games and gave some practical information. After the welcome session, participants could continue getting to know each other freely, but many were tired after the travel and preferred to rest. A few participants arrived late in the evening so they unfortunately missed the session. A welcome poster and the helpful staff at the reception ensured that everyone got what they needed for the first evening.

### **Programme day 1**

The first official day started with an opening and welcome speech by European Youth Centre Budapest. This gave the participants an overview of the Council of Europe and the Centre. The session continued with a team presentation to let the participants get to know the team. After the team presentation, the session was completed with some additional name and icebreaking games. This also gave an opportunity to participants who arrived late to get to know each other.

The aim of the second session was to deal with participants' hopes, fears and expectations. First, the aims and objectives of the study session were presented and explained to the participants and following that, the programme content and flow of the entire week was presented. Following the programme presentation, the participants had time to think about their hopes, fears and contributions and create a flipchart-poncho stating them. Afterwards, they presented their ponchos.

The session ended in plenary with a discussion about what rules should be applied during the study session, so that everyone felt comfortable and safe in the group and could get the most out of the study session. The rules brought up by the participants were then written down on a flipchart and hung up on the wall, where they stayed the remainder of the week.

After lunch a teambuilding session was held. The task was to build a marble run over a given distance. The task was to be completed as the whole group together. The participants were randomly split into 4 groups where they were working in. Each of the four groups had to build a different part of the marble run and the teams had to negotiate by themselves who will construct which part and how they will fit together. The groups were all working at a different place not visible from the other places. To exchange with the other groups, the groups could send one representative to a neutral place where they could meet and exchange with the other teams. As they had to send every time a different person of the team to discuss with the other groups, each individual was very needed for the group and had to contribute actively to the team. This made the participants aware that they have to work together to succeed and how useful group work can be. For those participants who are a bit shy, it was a lot easier to take part and contribute as they were working in a small team but were still part of the whole group-project and this helped them minimise their fears.

The aim of creating a group dynamic and team spirit was fully met. The participants were very eager to make their project a success and contributed to find different solutions in their team. Then this was brought up to the meeting with the other teams in order to pick one single solution, the best of all. The different parts of the constructions did also show the characteristics of the team that built it, so it was distinguishable on the respective solution if the group mainly consisted of participants with a technical, creative, artistic or other background.

Session four of the first programme day was about elements of personal identity. The aim of this session was to introduce the methodology of storytelling to the participants in a simple way. The session started by the introduction of different genres of stories in connection to different levels of the identity. A crane taking flight was used as a model. The crane circles the nest before it can orientate the direction when it sets out to migrate. The different circles represented the different layers of identity. First, the bird flies very close to its nest, recognising the surroundings and itself. It then starts recognising the surroundings and in ever bigger circles before taking off. This can be seen in parallel with a person first looking his or her personal identity through life stories and hearing stories like fairy tales and anecdotes from their own life. The second layer of the nest and the family can be related to stories like fairy tales, and then we have the close surroundings of the local town or city. Here you hear stories about the foundation of a town, the local heroes and stories that establish the local history. Then we have the national stories and epic stories, like Kalevala in Finland. Finally, for this model we had the European level. This level maybe filled with prejudice and an expression of this is urban legends. But it could also be uniting when we recognise the similarities between the national stories and the platform they offer for reproducing a European epic story.

After explaining this introduction, we split into smaller groups that were hosted by different team members. In the groups, participants shared favourite fairy tales and the idea was that these stories would help as a tool on reflection on the participants as well as a moment of sharing for creating a stronger collaboration between the participants. The team members' role as host in the groups was to facilitate the discussion and explore further what is brought up by the participants. The groups then gathered again in the plenary for a comprehensive debriefing of the session.

Before ending the fourth session of the day, the team presented the daily reflection. The participants were divided into six groups and asked to meet every afternoon after the daily programme to reflect on their experience of the day. Each group was facilitated by a team member. As the same group members met repeatedly for 30-45 minutes, they built a setting of trust where it felt safe to share feelings and opinions. This was also a tool for the preparatory team to receive feedback and do changes if needed.

For the evening the participants prepared samples of different food that is typical and/or traditional for their country. Additionally, everyone dressed up as a national character or hero from their country. Each participant explained the story of their character and some gave even a small performance. With all these different stories, the participants could learn a lot about various cultural backgrounds and the central values of different societies. After the presentation, the buffet was open and everyone could mingle around to taste different food and experience the culinary backgrounds of countries from all over Europe. They also had a deeper discussion about the national characters.

## **Programme day 2**

The aim of the morning session was to get a common understanding about the current challenges in Europe and how Europe changed during the last years. Using web articles, news portals and social media, the participants researched and discussed in groups about current European challenges and their backgrounds. The groups processed the information into media headlines in media format of text, pictures, voice and film and made a common exhibition in the plenary room. Then they visited the exhibition, did presentations to each other about their news headlines and did personal reflection. In the end, the group gathered in plenary to debrief the process and results.

The aim of the session was met, even if the participants, as expected, picked only the news headlines that were most relevant for them. Some challenges, like youth unemployment and social exclusion, were brought up by several groups as young people from all over Europe face these challenges. Other issues were visible in the national news headlines in only some regions of Europe, even if they were relevant for whole Europe. This made the participants question the power of media and motivated them to check and verify the news across various resources. The exhibition brought up discussions about how decision making in Europe affects the regular life such as for farmers, students and minority groups –and shortly what is the procedure of European lobbying for the own interests.

Some adjustments of the task had to be done while it was in process. The second session was originally planned to be divided into an exhibition, personal reflection and discussions in groups about the exhibition and debriefing. The group task was taken away, as the participants have put much effort into creating the exhibition, and they wanted more time to do presentations of their work. This is good to take into consideration if the task is done with another group.

This session was relevant for the study session flow for several reasons:

- the group work format continued the process of getting to know each other,

- current European challenges were researched, displayed and discussed, so after this the group had a common understanding what was meant when we later in the programme mentioned this term, and
- by exploring the exhibition the news headlines revealed facts about the countries and cultures of the participants.

The aim of the afternoon sessions was for the participants to experience the impact of the current challenges (those that were identified in the previous session) in Europe in a safe environment. They built up 4 role plays on 4 themes: education, health, employment and immigration, using the information they gathered in the morning and the effect these challenges have in their lives.

Participants were very creative in building up their stories and characters.

Considering the short time to prepare, the plays were well put together, reflecting the theme assigned and involving all participants. Distributing roles was sometimes a challenge since some of the characters were difficult; one group even drew them up rather than consensually assign them. Some of the roles were uncomfortable for them, some well-known. It was interesting to see how they relate to the roles and what insights they bring.

One of the groups had challenges in deciding on the story, which was a good opportunity to reflect on different ideas within a team and how to manage that as well.

Also working together on the European challenges gave the participants time to reflect on practical ways that these challenges impact their life and discuss how it defines them personally.

This session was relevant for the study session flow because:

- it build up a role play on the challenges they have identified earlier in the morning
- participants performed the role play and acquired new experiences in that regard
- participants acknowledged and deeply understood the impact the changes have on their personal lives and the lives of young people in general

This evening the participants had a self-facilitated game evening. They had a lot of fun, but the aim of the evening programme was also to continue the group building process and to share games that can be suitable for the participants to use in their home organisations.

### **Programme day 3**

The aim of the morning sessions was to identify the traits, qualities or things that are defined at national level that would provide a platform to explore different perspectives on the meaning of national identity. It started with a brainstorming in the big group on "What is a nation," going into the nationalism mini-lecture by Leonidas Karakatsanis and a personal reflection – "What is mine? Is it national identity or common traits of people?" Then, there was a video presentation and discussions on the video as well as the exercise "Who is the member of the "national community?"

This session gave a clear image about nation, nationalism and how these terms developed historically. It also brought about the discussion that these terms are "constructed" and people adhere or not. This piece of information particularly made some of the participants say "nationalism is stupid" or "nationalism is nonsense". The speaker engaged the audience with the presentation and exercises quite quickly and at a deep level. The exercises gave everyone a chance to speak and express their ideas or feelings on the subject.

These sessions were relevant for the study session flow for several reasons:

- it raised awareness of the national identity traits participants are using or giving importance to;
- participants clearly understood their national values and how they function in their lives;
- young people experienced different perspectives, differences and similarities.

The aim of the last session of the day was to provide the space for a deeper understanding of the movements and how it affects the life of young people. Therefore, the two invited experts Balint Josa and Leonidas Karakatsanis tell about the rise of the political extreme right in both Hungary and Greece. There was also a view on the official video of the No Hate Speech Movement, presentation of the national campaign in Hungary and the local NGO, Foundation of Subjective Value's work through the campaign.

Invited speakers were very vivid and the information they provided was very interesting for the participants. The audience was very engaged in discussions with the speakers, asking questions and making comments. The presentations had a big impact on the participants as the cases were related to their daily life and were quite descriptive.

This session was relevant for the study session flow for several reasons:

- it provided space for sharing information with guests;
- presented case studies;
- time for Q&A, very important for participants' deeper understanding on the subject.

Following the daily program, there was an optional movie screening evening that attracted all the participants. The movie was "The Other Town", a documentary work by Nefin Dinc, shot in both Turkey and Greece. Exploring the themes of otherness, hostility, nostalgia, historical dialogue and nationalism, the movie complemented the discussions of the day visualising the theoretical issues that was brought about earlier and provided a platform for participants to discuss further on such issues over concrete examples.

#### **Programme day 4**

The session in the morning was about national identity. The aim of this session was to bring the group together by finding similarities in the characteristics of heroes that are described in the national stories. The national narratives are often used as a way of expressing values and characteristics that are important in that nation and thus, help in creating and maintaining a national identity. But with this exercise the aim was for the participants to realise that many of the characteristics that are present in these stories are actually similar in other countries. This makes it quite visible that the national identity is constructed through such stories.

The participants were asked to think about a national story character and his/her/its knowledge, values, motivations, skills and draw them. They then told the stories and compared the heroes in smaller groups. The groups were then encouraged to use the characteristics of their heroes to create the European hero, and to build a surrounding story for the hero. The participants were presented some elements of fairy tales as help for a framework for the story.

The result of the European stories was a success; the participants truly enjoyed the results of the other groups as well as performing their own. Debriefing was a key element to bring the group back from the entertainment aspect to the topic of reconstruction of national and international identities, of the exercise. The good group dynamics and safe feeling within the group supported the participants' openness to perform the stories. On purpose, there were not very strict guidelines on how the stories should be performed and it was only mentioned that the groups should choose a storyteller to reproduce the story for the group. Most of the groups chose anyway to act out the stories.

The sessions were important in the flow of the study session, because it showed how stories can be used to construct and reconstruct national identities. We think that this is the same mechanism as it would be for creating an international -here European- identity, through oral history, folklore and storytelling. Within the group it was interesting to see how many national stories had similar structures and we even discussed the possibility of shared narratives, where for example different sides of one war can create stories that best support their national identity. This shows how storytelling does not follow the winner's side but has ulterior motives it can support.

The participants had the afternoon and evening free and most of them used the time to explore Budapest. We chose to have a free afternoon as the participants needed some time to reflect on their learning process and to get a bit of distance to the intensive work on the theme. The group had dinner together in the city centre.

## **Programme day 5**

We dedicated a full day to let participants develop and deliver workshops, which they can take back home. We chose three topics that had been central during the previous days' sessions:

- European Identity
- Intercultural Dialogue
- Freedom of Speech versus Hate Speech

Both morning sessions were used for preparing the workshop. The participants divided themselves into six groups so that two workshops were made about each topic. The participants were asked to prepare a workshop that in reality could take longer, but that could be demonstrated to the fellow participants in 20 minutes. The groups decided themselves what kind of participants their workshop was targeted for, and decide about aim and objectives. They were given two methods that they had to include, such as a method where the participants cannot speak, a method that include treasure hunt or a method that included dancing. In addition they could use other non-formal methods. The full list of methods is attached to the report, as well as a workshop guideline sheet that was given to the groups.

Giving tasks in written format is a good idea here as it would be difficult to remember all instructions once read. Some participants had experience of facilitating workshops, but for many, it was new. Therefore they were first a bit nervous about the task, but very soon they adapted and enjoyed it.



We ended with common debriefing. Each group had 20 minutes to run the workshop while the others in the room acted participants. Additional 10 minutes per group were reserved for discussion between workshop leaders and participants. The participants did an excellent work, much better than they had expected from themselves when they first started preparing the workshops. Also they realised that the given methodological directions, which first felt like impossible to incorporate in the workshop, actually were helpful. The participants also thought about how to give workshop instructions in a clear way, how to balance different parts in the workshop, how to involve all participants, how to facilitate debriefing and how to do time management. At the same time they used what they had learned the last days about their selected topic and they did further research when needed.

Here follows a description of the workshops:

- Intercultural Dialogue
  - o Group 1: The workshop consisted of a simulation game on how to communicate without having a common language. The task of the game was to place on a flipchart different shaped and coloured pieces of paper so they became a specific picture. The first part was done in small groups so that only one in the group knew the picture and should communicate the order of the pieces so the others made the picture. The roles in the groups rotated in rounds of pictures. The second task was doing the same the whole group together with a bigger picture. The challenge was that no one could use normal words in the communication, but had to use a combination of words from different languages for up, down, turn left, and so on. The game itself exists, but the group had adapted it to the task and made the game material themselves.
  - o Group 2: The workshop started with a small simulation of the “Broken Telephone”. Participants were in a line, the person first in the line whispered a question in the ear of the next person, she/he repeated it to the next and so on. When the question reached the last person he should try to answer the question to what he heard and again pass the answer back to the first person. This was repeated a few times and usually the question/answer was wrong when it came to the end of the line. The group sat down in a circle for debriefing, and aiming for a discussion about challenges in intercultural communication. The workshop leaders took notes on a flipchart about the challenges, and asked then the participants how they have met such challenges when dealing with international youth work. The workshop ended here, but it was mentioned that if there would be more time this session could be connected to the one about the news exhibition session we had earlier in the week and analyse what was the failures and successes of intercultural dialogue in the challenging situations presented there.
- Freedom of Speech versus Hate Speech
  - o Group 3: The workshop started with a warm-up in the format of participants dancing in a circle and when the music stopped they should fast get chairs and sit down. Under the chairs the participants found notes. The notes gave direction of which role to play in the next discussion, for example a role figure commenting on other people’s hair or attitude. The arguments spoken out were noted on a flipchart. Then the participants discussed which of them were belonging to Freedom of Speech and which to Hate Speech. The fine line was discussed, as well as circumstances, the role of the person saying it and the target group.

- o Group 4: The workshop started with the showing of a movie from YouTube with a poem by Günter Grass. This poem called What Must Be Said is highly critical of the Israeli government. The participants were then asked to state their opinion about the poem and whether it was hate speech. The leaders then revealed that Grass was a Nobel prize winner and we discussed if this affected our opinion. Then other characteristics of the poet were revealed (gender, age, etc.). All the while looking whether this had an effect. In the end they also revealed that he had been a member of the SS troops in the Second World War. This changed the opinion and had a big impact and sparked a discussion on what effect a message has, when it comes by whom it is said. The participants were very engaged in the debate and the discussion could have continued further but it was rounded up very nicely by the workshop leaders.
- European Identity
  - o Group 5: The participants were asked to find hidden documents based on hints written in poem format. The documents contained descriptions and drawings about people's heroes from all over Europe, based on which the participants were asked to make human statues. After finding, reading and performing about all heroes, the workshop would have continued with participants choosing two characteristics most appreciated in their culture and discussed this. This last part was not done with this group as time ran out, but if the workshop is used with other groups this perspective of discussion is a good way to get depth of the workshop.
  - o Group 6: The participants were divided in three groups that were given different tasks. One group should use theatre to express their vision of the European past; the second group should use photography to express the present and the third social media to express the future. The participants then presented their results for the group.

This evening many of the participants joined a guided boat cruise on the Danube river.

## **Programme day 6**

The sessions before lunch were built as an Open Space. The preparation team members facilitated some sessions and the previous day the participants could sign up for facilitating a session. The Open Space contained the following sessions:

- Ragip and Pia facilitated a session on funding sources for youth projects. Ragip told the participants about European Youth Foundation by two short movies and a presentation. He also told shortly about the Anna Lindh Foundation. Pia told the participants about the youth part of Erasmus+ by short movies and presentation. The programmes were presented and after that followed a discussion about what programme to use for what project and what kind of projects are possible to get funding for. Participants asked preparation team members later that day and after the study session for consultation on funding sources for specific projects they plan.
- Pia had a spot for visibility of the study session and the material created at this workshop was planned to be specifically used for the RYEurope magazine. First only a few participants showed up, which was convenient as the small group could easily develop the format and layout of the page. When more people joined they added content in form of drawings, funny or important quotes, pictures, headline suggestions. The outcome of this workshop was that the participants commonly made the magazine the two magazine pages and there presented the study session as they saw it. A third page was later added with a description of the week made by a participant, Breda Forrest.

- One participant made a quiz on project formats that can be supported by Erasmus+ and that can involve programme countries and neighbouring countries.
- Elena held a workshop on "How to build self-esteem in young people." Around 15-20 participants were involved in the workshop during the 1.5 hours. It started with the actual self-esteem of the youth workers, if they themselves do not have it, then it is highly unlikely they can be a model for youngsters. Three exercises on self-awareness were done - qualities, things they like about themselves, things they like or dislike in other people, sharing experiences. The workshop was a starting point for many of the participants on how they perceive themselves and which are the messages they send out to other people.
- Another participant presented a study and scientific test about how colour is related to personality. The test can be found at: <http://www.marcaccetta.com/personality-test.php>
- There was one session titled "games" where different games were presented. We then played a game of names where participants competed in teams, sitting in a circle trying to get the opponents in certain seats to win. After that we played some other games.
- Ragip facilitated a session on "using oral history in contested geographies" where he discussed about the methodology of oral history and various contexts where it was used for historical dialogue and reconciliation. Around 8 participants were interested in this session.

The open space workshops were very appreciated by the participants. It was important to keep a balance between the numbers of sessions that were running simultaneously. There was little movement between the parallel workshops; most of the people joined one stayed until the end. This showed both their interest in the themes was high and the content was interesting enough to keep them involved. Some of the participants knew how to build an objective but many not. So, the information on that was welcomed and the examples allowed people to build on that.

For the SWOT analysis, personal reflection and development plans it was interesting to see how people react when they start having a dialogue with themselves. "The letter to yourself" was particularly enjoyed.

The study session ended with an evaluation and closing session. Therefore all participants went first into their reflection groups to give them time to close and say goodbye to their reflection groups. Additionally, each reflection group prepared two statues from one day, showing what has been done. After gathering in plenary each reflection group showed their statues and told what it means. This gave an opportunity to all participants to refresh the week and bring back in their mind all the days and sessions to make them ready for the evaluation.

For the first part of the evaluation, participants answered questions by placing themselves on a line from left to right with the meaning "not at all" to "fully achieved". This gave a very visible feedback to the questions asked.

In the second part, each participant was given a detailed question form about the study session and its content, which they were asked to complete.

For the more detailed information about the evaluation outcomes, please consult attached documents.

After that, the study session has been officially closed with awarding the participants with their certificates, which was highly appreciated by the participants.

For the farewell evening, the participants arranged games and competitions.

### **General information on the programme**

Several times we adapted the programme to meet the needs of the participants and we gave space and time for debriefing. Everything was connected to the theme, including the evening activities. Energisers and switching place/setting were used throughout the week to keep the participants interest high. The working language was English and translation was only needed in a few situations. We gave space for the participants to interact and share their experience of the theme during the sessions, and they often continued with this during breaks and evenings. They also used their free time to share their realities and plan common follow-up activities. The level of trust within the group was quite high which was very helpful in creating a safe learning atmosphere leading to moments of strong experience. Apart from the individual communication skills, some sessions where the participants had chance to work in small groups were effective for positive group dynamics.

The cooperation in the preparation team improved a lot along the process. It took some time to establish common understanding and smooth communication, but once it was reached, it was rewarded with a good feeling in the team and intense sharing of learning. Some guest speakers stayed some extra time with the team and involved the team members in interesting discussions and insight in their professional area.

## **Outcomes**

The biggest outcome of the study session was the unique experience of the young people who usually do not have such chance. Being exposed to such issues and discussing them with their peers were particularly valuable.

There was a constant learning environment that was created by the participants themselves. They took the opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other at every single possibility.

The participants learned:

- to apply intercultural communication,
- to consider current European issues from different point of view,
- various topics that weigh in today's world such as youth unemployment, intolerance and racism towards immigrants, hate speech etc.,
- to assess current European issues on a comparative perspective,
- about what the personal identity is built on,
- where national identity comes from, how it is shown in different parts of Europe and how it both unite and divide people,
- to consider freedom of speech different from hate speech,
- the power of storytelling in bringing people together as well as separating them from each other,
- what values European people have in common and what strength this gives us,
- initial steps towards developing, preparing and delivering a workshop on central topics of the study session, and
- to reflect on the own learning process.

The results of the evaluation were that the participants were in general very pleased with the week. The written evaluation showed that the participants graded all parts of the study session as ok, good and very good. Most categories had results of good and very good, while ok was given especially for the participants possibilities to use what they have learned in their organisation. The reason for this was that the target group in the organisations vary from primary school children to young adults, so these complex themes can be difficult to work on with the youngest.

A criticism came from the participants was that some of the days could have been better balanced. While some of the days were quite heavily loaded, some were a bit more relaxed.

Each team member learnt different new competences from this study session. Based on notes from the advance preparatory team meeting and the meetings during the week the following was learnt:

- Patience and listening skills were improved as we are all from different backgrounds and needed to truly understand each other to cooperate smoothly.
- We shared many good methods that can be used for future projects; full sessions, single methods and energisers were useful.
- We observed each other's facilitation styles and learned small tricks from each other.
- We learned more about the work of the Council of Europe. We understood for example the importance of the No Hate Speech Campaign and how it can be used in our organisations.
- We got to know more about each other's organisations and the young members we have within them.

The preparatory team was in general very satisfied with the opportunity to hold this study session at the EYCB. Here follows some feedback from the team:

- The working and living conditions at EYCB were excellent and the communication regarding administration worked well.
- The preparatory meeting was very essential for team building, getting a common understanding of the study session and to communicate about practicalities.
- It was helpful to have an educational advisor who know what is expected from the Council of Europe side and who can help with practical arrangements.
- Compared to earlier study sessions, we experienced less flexibility, which resulted in some difficulties for us for example when a few participants lost meal tickets or regarding guidelines on how to use the budget of preparatory expenses. In general we were anyway satisfied with the practical arrangements.

## Follow-up

The participants developed and practiced thematic workshops that can be used back at home. The team also provided them with session outline forms, methodological elements etc.

As the participants are coming from member organisations of two already established networks, the organisers who are also members of the same network will stay in touch with the participants. They are encouraged to get in contact with each other for their future work as well as with organisers for future reference.

Some participants took the initiative to continue the cooperation in the form of common European youth projects. This is fully in the hands of the participants, but the team members gave extra support and told about useful resources. The participants have reported back that these plans are now in process. Some participants have also casually met up when they have travelled in Europe in the summer and some have told they plan to meet up in the autumn.

No publication or website was considered as an outcome of this activity. However, an active Facebook is in use by the participants and organisers of the study session and material about the study session was gathered to be published in Rural Youth Europe's Rural Voices magazine. The three pages long article show the study session from the participant's point of view. The magazine was published in June 2014, printed in 350 copies and sent to all RYEurope event participants of the past two years, to members, partners and funders, sent in electronic version to ca. 5000 receivers and attached to this report. Also several articles about the study session were published in the sending organisations' magazines, newsletters or webpages. A copy is attached of the article in the magazine made by Finlandssvenska 4H.

The workshops and other study session elements can be used as they are or as adjusted in the participants' organisations or in schools and youth houses in their community. A general aim for RYEurope's and ECYC's study sessions was that youth workers and volunteer leaders learn about the European dimension of local issues. As they are multipliers in their organisations, their broader perspective on these issues gets spread to their target group.

The Youth Department could use workshop outlines and methods we have used. Storytelling is a powerful tool to combat racism and discrimination in Europe. It is also convenient for young people who work as multipliers.

The cooperation between RYEurope and ECYC was reinforced. Both organisations realised that their work can be complementary and contribute to young people's empowerment.

RYEurope and ECYC and their young people also got to know more about the work of the Council of Europe as we incorporated Council of Europe information in several sessions. The No Hate Speech Movement was central in this study session and we got inspired to how to use the campaign in the organisations.

In addition to above, the participants involvement at their organisations increased significantly. Several have reported that shortly after the study session, they have (or plan to) participated in the volunteer or board work at their organisation. Two participants have applied for a board position in the RYEurope international board. The selection is not yet done at the time when this report is written.

## Final conclusions and recommendations

Rebuilding the European Story was a study session where the participants, as well as the team members, went through a remarkable process. For both for the participants and the team, it was individuals with very different backgrounds arriving to the EYCB, and a week later a united group of people. There are many elements making this process happen: challenging programme, interactive methods, varied group work and storytelling are some of the successful elements, which were planned ahead and adjusted to the group. Some of the leisure activities, such as a game, kept up the group spirit throughout the week. The games broke barriers, allowed the participants to get close to each other and allowed everyone to join. The team's contribution to the games was marking games' evening into the programme, so it brought the participants together to play even if they all were adults. This shows that even a self-facilitated games' evening can have good influence on the study session and could be introduced to study sessions where it is appropriate.

Another element of the unifying process was that the participants supported each other during sessions. Some participants had long experience of youth work and had the skills get everyone involved in the group work and they knew when to step forward and when to let others talk during in debriefing situations. This helped especially the more shy participants. Our group of participants also included persons to whom intercultural situations were new and who were less aware of their own actions in the group dynamics. By the end of the week did also they find a more comfortable place in the group.

The previously mentioned elements of the process resulted in trust among the participants. As one participant expressed in writing after the study session; this group made an environment where it was OK to be yourself to a level you can seldom experience in "real life". He, as well as other participants, were surprised how much they learned about themselves during this week.

Coming back to the challenging programme and interactive methods, this in combination with the united group brought up the constant learning environment. The participants were challenged by topics they were not used to discuss, but suddenly so inspired about it and the discussions went on over lunch, dinner and at the disco. They shared not only facts and opinions, but they also shared their life stories and got thereby a deeper intercultural understanding.

Some participants have afterwards described a cultural shock that they had after they returned home. It was challenging for them to be still in the study session mood at their home surrounding where others around them didn't have such experience. The Irish participant Breda Forrest wrote down a conversation she had at home with a friend after the study session. This text describes the study session experience from a participant's point of view, and also shows a bit what kind of cultural shock she had when coming back home. This is the same text that was publicised in the Rural Voices magazine, and it follows here:

- *So, how was Budapest?*
- *Amazing! Really, really good. I would totally recommend it.*
- *Wow, that sounds great! What did you do?*
- *Well... it was a week-long study session exploring things like identity, nationality, history, politics, myth, legend, conflict, youth problems, extremism, conflict, shared values, storytelling ... It was a lot of fun.*
- *Fun?*



- *It's hard to explain but it really was brilliant fun.*
- *'Identity ... history, politics... values.' Fun?*
- *I should start again. During the daytime, we were learning about all these various things and then, at night, there were loads of different activities.*
- *Ok cool. Like what?*
- *Like ... TOTAL NINJA DESTRUCTION! It's a brilliant game.*
- *Ninja?*
- *Ya. It was ...*
- *But everyone there was an adult, weren't they?*
- *Yes, but ...*
- *So it was a bunch of adults, playing 'Ninja'?*
- *Yes but it was a load of ...*
- *Fun? Ya, you said that.*
- *But there were other games too!*
- *Like?*
- *Like 'The Kissing Game'!*
- *The WHAT?*
- *That was my initial reaction too but it was actually a lot of ...*
- *Let me guess – fun? Was it like Spin-the-Bottle?*
- *Oh no, no, no. It was nothing like that. Everyone had to pull a name out of a hat and that person was your kissing-target. You had to kiss them without anyone seeing or anyone catching you before you could move onto your next target. Whoever had the most 'kills' without getting caught, won.*
- *That sounds ... kind of ... illegal.\**
- *On no, it wasn't anything sinister at all. It was just a way of getting to know all these new people*
- *By kissing them?*
- *When you say it like that, it sounds weird. Let me give you another example.*
- *Ok.*
- *During the day, we gave presentations, did role-plays, made news, told stories, created myths, looked at the world around us, discussed opinions ...*
- *Sounds kind of like school...*
- *But it didn't feel like it at all. It was easy-going and natural and enjoyable. Very positive! People even gave each other random massages!*
- *What? Massages? You're joking.*
- *No, apparently that's what they do up north. So everyone was doing it by the end of the week.*
- *Massaging each other?*
- *Not in THAT WAY!*
- *Riiiiiiight.*
- *It was an incredible week but it's very difficult to explain.*
- *I'm getting that.*

As described earlier, we put effort on the transfer of knowledge, skills and concrete workshop formats. The evaluation showed that the transfer might be difficult for some participants due to that this topic is not so relevant for their target group. Still, a major part of the participants evaluated that they can have practical use in their home organisation of the knowledge, skills and workshops. What definitely happened was an attitude change. The participants wrote in the evaluation and discussed about that the study session made them become more open to other cultures and European issues at large. As most of them are multipliers in their organisations, it is likely that their attitude influences others and thereby spread.

On the arrival day of the study session, the preparation team had an evaluation meeting. We checked the objectives together with the final programme as it had turned out and could confirm that we had worked on each of the objectives in a satisfying way. The aim of the study session was to explore, share, and develop competences of storytelling as a tool for intercultural communication reassessing European identity among young people in the changing world. Most of the methods were related to storytelling, so the participants experienced them and also used them when preparing their own workshop. Excellent feedback was given on the use of storytelling and the possibilities to use them, for example for sessions on intercultural communication, in the sending organisations. The sessions of the second day gave a quick overview of the current European challenges. The most important outcome of these sessions was that the participants became more aware of how news are channelled, censured or excluded, so they need to check sources more widely to get a more objective understanding of what happens in the world. The reassessing of the European identity is in the end very personal, but the challenging programme and united multicultural group help each of the participants in the process.

The title, "Rebuilding the European Story", was more as a vision than an actual task. Still, this group definitely built their European story of the week and they developed soft skills for being multipliers. Both the diverse group of participants and the participation team searched some time for a common ground, but when getting over that phase the reward was a very enriching and rewarding study session experience.

## Appendix 1. Programme

# REBUILDING THE EUROPEAN STORY

PROGRAMME 4-11 May 2014

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	04/05/2014	05/05/2014	06/05/2014	07/05/2014	08/05/2014	09/05/2014	10/05/2014	11/05/2014
...9:30		Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
9:30-11:00		Intro and getting to know each other	Current challenges in Europe	National identity	European Heros	Practical adoption	Open space	Departure
11:00-11:30		Break	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break	
11:30-13:00		Hopes, fears and expectations	Current challenges in Europe	National identity	European Heros	Practical adoption	Open space	
13:00-14:30		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
14:30-16:00		Group building	Impact of the European challenges	No Hate Speech Movement	Free afternoon and evening	Practice of practical adoption	Personal development	
16:00-16:30		Break	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break	
16:30-18:00		Elements of personal identity	Impact of European challenges	No Hate Speech Movement		Practice of practical adoption	Evaluation	
18:00-18:30	Arrival	Reflection	Reflection	Reflection		Reflection		
19:00-20:30	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner in town	Dinner	Dinner	
20:30...	Welcome evening	Intercultural evening	Games evening	Movie screening	Night out	Participants evening	Farwell party	

## Appendix 2. Additional material

Attached material about the study session Rebuilding the European Story can be found at the link: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/mchvs3fpibtwx1p/AADNhiUpWjxx3LLPB4TlalyFa>

## Appendix 3. List of participants and preparatory team

### Participants selected by Rural Youth Europe:

- Lilit Ghazaryan, Armenia, Armenian Caritas
- Sebastian Lassnig, Austria, Rural Youth Carinthia
- Wolfgang Weidinger, Austria, Rural Youth Austria
- Rovshan Habibov, Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan Tafakkur Youth Association
- Narmin Javadova, Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan Tafakkur Youth Association
- Aysel Mammadova, Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan Tafakkur Youth Association
- Tobias Loevgren Madsen, Denmark, Danish 4H
- Lasse Godsk Joergensen, Denmark, Danish 4H
- Riikka Ylikauppila, Finland, Finnish 4H
- Mari Niiranen, Finland, Finnish 4H
- Katariina Kokkonen, Finland, Finnish 4H
- Elina Tuomaala, Finland, Finnish 4H
- Mirja Tero, Finland, Finnish 4H
- Emilia Granqvist, Finland, Finland's Swedish 4H
- Jenny Brokvist, Finland, Finland's Swedish 4H
- Giorgi Jasiashvili, Georgia, Active Youth Union
- Lela Iordanishvili, Georgia, Active Youth Union
- Breda Forrest, Ireland, Macrana Feirme
- James Power, Ireland, Macrana Feirme
- Āris Brencis, Latvia, Latvian 4H
- Lita Mickēviča, Latvia, Latvian 4H
- Endijs Blums, Latvia, Latvian Young Farmer's Club
- Elise Andersbakken Lunde, Norway, 4H Norway
- Megan Marshall, United Kingdom, National Federation of Young Farmer's Clubs
- Mark Allard, United Kingdom, National Federation of Young Farmer's Clubs
- Geoff Thompson, United Kingdom, Young Farmers' Club of Ulster
- Gareth Ellis Thomas, United Kingdom, Wales Young Farmers' Club
- Nia Teleri Jones, United Kingdom, Wales Young Farmers' Club

### Participants selected by European Confederation of Youth Clubs:

- Sofya Piradyan, Armenia, "New Generation" Humanitarian NGO
- Bahruz Mammadov, Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan Bureau on Protection of Human Rights and Rule of Law
- Karitas Harpa Davidsdottir, Iceland, ECYC Iceland
- Doru Craiut, Romania, ECYC Romania

### The preparatory team consisted of:

- Pia Nurmio-Perälä, Finland, RYEurope
- Lukas Helfenstein, Switzerland, RYEurope
- Eelin Hoffström, Estonia, RYEurope
- Elena Lotrean, Romania, ECYC
- Anca Popa, Romania, ECYC

Ragip Zik, Turkey, Pool of Trainers of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe