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Strasbourg, May 2012



## Seminar

### Using E-learning in Intercultural Non-formal Education Activities

*Experiences, lessons learnt, challenges and perspectives*

European Youth Centre Budapest  
29 November – 2 December 2011

Seminar documentation

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the participants of the seminar and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Council of Europe.

This report has been developed with the help of the participants and rapporteurs of the working groups from the seminar.

This report was compiled and edited by Mara Georgescu, educational advisor, Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

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## Executive Summary

This report includes the main documentation and conclusions of the seminar organised by the youth sector of the Council of Europe, in November 2011, with the aim of discussing and sharing experiences of using E-learning in intercultural non-formal education today, and identifying quality standards and criteria, as a contribution to the process of improving the quality of non-formal education.

Like with its residential non-formal education activities, the youth sector of the Council of Europe considers the use of quality standard essential also for online learning activities. The Council of Europe's youth sector needed also, in view of the seminar, to take stock of its achievements in the use of E-learning and to improve its E-learning practices, while remaining within the principles and framework of youth work and non-formal education.

The seminar was organised as a mutual learning opportunity for those who intend to use E-learning in non-formal education activities with young people. Learning from each others' practices of E-learning was complemented by educational and theoretical input on the use of E-learning and debates.

The main objectives of the seminar were:

- to analyse current practices of E-learning in the framework of intercultural non-formal education activities, using as a starting point the study carried out by the youth sector of the Council of Europe;
- to share examples and practices of the use of E-learning for the purposes of non-formal education;
- to analyse the challenges and possibilities of the use of E-learning for non-formal education activities;
- to propose guiding principles and quality criteria for the use of E-learning for non-formal education activities.

Participants in the meeting had a variety of profiles, from youth trainers, to E-learning experts, tutors for courses online, members of youth organisations which base their work on E-learning and other forms of online collaboration, etc.

From these two days of seminar, the main outcomes are fourfold:

- identification of guidelines for quality criteria, which will be in the coming months intertwined with the study on E-learning carried out by the youth sector in preparation of the seminar,
- identification of the specificities of learning in the use of E-learning,
- identification of the main features of a learning environment for carrying out non-formal intercultural activities in E-learning,
- identification of possible competences and of a curriculum for a training of trainers that are to use E-learning in their non-formal intercultural activities.

The report introduces the reader to the main outcomes of the seminar, the features of the seminar and provides also a detailed representation of each seminar session and its outcomes.

## Seminar results

Even if the seminar had a fairly intensive programme with a number of ambitious expectations both from the organisers and the participants, the outcomes provide an insight into the current situation in the use of E-learning in a diversity of settings and valuable input to the process of defining and using quality criteria. The approaches the seminar proposed were in this respect adequate: participants had a chance to learn from one another, both from their respective achievements and the recurrent obstacles in the use of E-learning.

Participants analysed E-learning from the educational perspective, which is to this date still a terrain to explore. Different practices than in the offline environment, creativity and adapting both the technology and the educational processes to each other are the key concepts here.

From the working groups during the seminar, the outcomes of the seminar are fourfold:

- identification of guidelines for quality criteria, which will be in the coming months intertwined with the study on E-learning carried out by the youth sector in preparation of the seminar,
- identification of the specificities of learning in the use of E-learning,
- identification of the main features of a learning environment for carrying out non-formal intercultural activities in E-learning,
- identification of possible competences and of a curriculum for a training of trainers that are to use E-learning in their non-formal intercultural activities.

A first key outcome of the different working groups was to map the understanding of quality, which participants linked with institutional, funding, educational, result-oriented, evaluation, quality insurance, quality control aspects. Already, this diversity of the concepts widens the framework in which the research for quality criteria needs to be done.

### **A. Working group on ‘Guidelines for Quality criteria for E-learning non-formal intercultural learning activities’**

The group brainstormed on what needs to be in the quality criteria and identified two categories:

- aspects related to the actors/processes involved (learning, instructors, facilitators, technical support, stakeholders, etc)
- specific aspects regarding the added value of E-learning, like coverage and access for more learners, asynchronicity, flexibility.

Quality criteria should cover areas such as

- needs assessment
- course design – access, communication, types of E-learning (blended, pure E-learning, etc.), time and space, objectives, interactivity, non-formal learning, privacy and security
- group dynamics
- intercultural learning
- interactivity
- content and competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes)
- evaluation – impact, types, roles.

### **B. Working group on ‘Learning in E-learning non-formal intercultural learning activities’**

The group concluded that E-learning is not a replacement for residential trainings but an additional tool for learning. The group proposed the following aspects that need a proper reflection when designing learning in E-learning:

- time
- distance
- costs

- analysing competences of alleged target audience (and preferences)
- availability of technology for providers, trainers, and learners
- competences of trainers
- availability of materials (either existing ones or self-developed)
- overall and specific learning objectives
- the emotional aspect of learning

### **C. Working group on ‘Creating a learning environment in E-learning non-formal intercultural learning activities’**

The group identified guidelines for:

- ensuring safety and comfort of learners
- securing accessibility aspects
- ensuring effective navigation
- dealing with participants’ attendance online
- defining minimal requirements for learners
- defining minimal requirements for trainers
- maintaining learners’ motivation online
- ensuring the affordability of E-learning

### **D. Working group on ‘Competences and curriculum of a training of trainers in E-learning in non-formal intercultural learning activities’**

The competences trainers could develop during this training course are:

- specific technical competences
- pedagogical competences adapted to the online environment
- research competences.

The group simulated a curriculum for a blended-learning course. The curriculum was defined as follows, in line with the tradition of long-term training courses:

- E-learning introductory phase
- residential phase
- E-learning and practical phase (developing own projects / field project)
- residential evaluation phase.

## E-learning and the Council of Europe

Information and communication technologies (hereinafter ICT) and specifically E-learning are essential nowadays for a number of reasons, of political, sociological and economical order, and have marked a crossroad in the current learning and communication paradigms. E-learning is also part of this tendency. E-learning has been qualified, following the Lisbon European Council, as a learner-focused approach to “the use of new multimedia technologies and the internet to improve the quality of learning by facilitating access to resources and services, as well as remote exchanges and collaboration”<sup>1</sup>.

It is beyond doubt today that E-learning is an evolving concept, following the pace of technological innovation. In 2001 Manuel Castells was raising awareness about the capacity of information flows to affect the consciousness of society and cultural movements<sup>2</sup>. One can draw the conclusion from this that this requires, for example, that providers of online learning, while encouraging active, critical and discerning use of these technologies, maintain the same quality levels as in other forms of learning.

As far as the Council of Europe is concerned, its main initiatives regarding the use of Internet and ICT concern the concept of e-democracy, the combat of cybercrime, Internet governance and the protection of personal data online (particularly in the case of children). The Council of Europe has also strived for a use of Internet that be in line with the values the organisation promotes, and this has taken the form of the 2001 Convention on Cybercrime which defines offences that occur in the cyberspace and demands to the member states of the Organisation to set up a legislative framework and procedures against cybercrime<sup>3</sup>. The Convention on Cybercrime entered into force in July 2004 and it is the only binding international treaty on the subject to have been adopted to date.

The Council of Europe has also developed several standards related to the use of information and communication technologies, specifically linking them to the development of democracy and citizenship and what is called Internet governance on one hand, and with the compliance of Internet services with human rights, for example with the protection of personal data. The Recommendation Rec (2006) 12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on empowering children in the new information and communications environment underlines the need for empowerment with regard to information and communication services and technologies and the importance of developing competence in this field, in particular through training at all levels of the education system, formal and informal, and throughout life. Moreover, the Recommendation indicates that member states should develop a coherent information literacy and training strategy which is conducive to empowering children and their educators in order for them to make the best possible use of information and communication services and technologies.

In the European Union, the European Commission issued in 2008 the document “The use of ICT to support innovation and lifelong learning for all – A report on progress”. The report pointed out the status of E-learning as under-exploited in adult education and the risk of social exclusion due to the digital divide E-learning can produce. It also supported a more quality-oriented and efficiency-oriented view on E-learning.

These developments testify a growing interest for ICT use for the development of a society of knowledge, on one hand, and on the other hand they promote also a change in the use of online tools for educational purposes. For example, notions such as “community of practice” and “peer produced content”, essential in E-learning processes, are significantly relevant also for non-formal education processes. Most of the E-learning infrastructures and software include features based on constructivist views of educational process, which are also at the basis of non-formal learning theories and practices.

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, 2008, “The use of ICT to support innovation and lifelong learning for all – A report on progress”, definition used for the eLearning initiative and its successive developments

<sup>2</sup> Castells, Manuel (2001). *Internet Galaxy*. Oxford, Oxford University Press

<sup>3</sup> The Convention on Cybercrime is available at <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/185.htm>

These and other similarities supported the introduction and development of E-learning to in the training practices of major European youth stakeholders, such as the Council of Europe, SALTO resource centres, the European Commission etc.

Changes and innovation in learning paradigms raise new questions of quality and inclusion. Are these E-learning offers reflecting quality standards similar to those in residential learning? Is E-learning today as inclusive for all learners? These are some of the questions that animate the debate around E-learning. As eLearning Papers explains,

“When you really get down to analysing it, the promises of eLearning often have yet to materialise. The question of how eLearning can be successful becomes more urgent as we move from an “early adopter” stage to a more general offering. In a European educational market, it is critically important to gain an understanding of quality in eLearning. Many different concepts and approaches have been developed so far for many different contexts and purposes.”<sup>4</sup>

In relation to quality, the debate runs also in terms of practitioners’ learning, not only in formal education, where the field of E-learning has been quite extensively explored, but also in non-formal education processes, where the debate has been carried mostly in terms of compatibility of standards, principles, theoretical ground, values and methods.

The Directorate of Youth and Sport opened its first E-learning platform in 2005, when the ACT-HRE platform then became a core element of ACT-HRE (Advanced Compass Training in Human Rights Education). Some 100 participants took part in the E-learning platform and followed the course on-line and participated in some virtual sessions.

After ACT-HRE, the E-learning platform<sup>5</sup>, based on Moodle, was used in several other training courses organised by the Directorate of Youth and Sport, both for preparatory activities of the residential training courses, as a recipient for the courses documentation, and as a tool for join and follow-up activities of the group of course participants. In this landscape, the platform found its use not only in long-term training courses (where the blended learning element has been naturally present and evaluated to the same extent as the residential learning activities), but also for the Trainers’ Pool of the youth sector, for shorter residential training courses and, to a limited extent, for study sessions.

With the passage from the Web 1.0 to Web 2.0, the possibilities of linking E-learning with social media became easier, and led to the opening of a new platform based on Moodle 2.0 where most of the training and education activities of the youth sector of the Council of Europe are now based.

Like with its residential non-formal education activities, the youth sector of the Council of Europe considers the use of quality standard essential also for online learning activities. The “Quality standards in education and training activities of the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe” introduced in 2007 represent the benchmarks for all the activities and reflects the importance intercultural learning and non-formal education have.

A similar need emerges today to analyse E-learning activities through quality glasses and identify guidelines for E-learning activities. The Council of Europe’s youth sector needs thus to take stock of its achievements in the use of E-learning and to improve its E-learning practices, while remaining within the principles and frameworks of youth work and non-formal education. These practices, along with other experiences in this field existing in Europe today are the subject of a study carried out by the youth sector. The study analyses the links, features, objectives, possible formats in the use of E-learning for the purpose of non-formal education.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.elearningpapers.eu](http://www.elearningpapers.eu), Number 2, “Editorial: Quality in eLearning”.

<sup>5</sup> <http://act-hre.coe.int>

## Introduction to the seminar

This seminar was organised as a mutual learning opportunity for those who intend to use E-learning in non-formal education activities with young people. Learning from each others' practices and uses of E-learning were complemented by educational and theoretical input on the use of E-learning and debates.

During the seminar, the 30 participants discussed and shared experiences of using E-learning in intercultural non-formal education today, and discussed quality standards and criteria as a contribution to the process of improving the quality of non-formal education.

The main objectives of the seminar were:

- to analyse current practices of E-learning in the framework of intercultural non-formal education activities, using as a starting point the study being carried out by the youth sector of the Council of Europe;
- to share examples and practices of the use of E-learning for the purposes of non-formal education;
- to analyse the challenges and possibilities of the use of E-learning for non-formal education activities;
- to propose guiding principles and quality criteria for the use of E-learning for non-formal education activities.

The seminar was designed for participants who:

- act as trainers, activity coordinators, learning facilitators, in general practitioners involved directly in the development, management and coordination of E-learning activities, mostly, but not only in the field of non-formal education;
- have relevant experiences in using E-learning;
- are motivated to share their experiences and challenges with the other participants and contribute to the development of quality criteria for E-learning;
- are committed to attend for the full duration of the seminar;
- are able to work independently in English in both written and oral form;
- are resident in a state party to the European Cultural Convention.

Participants in the meeting had a variety of profiles, from youth trainers, to E-learning experts, tutors for courses online, members of youth organisations which base their work on E-learning and other forms of online collaboration.

It was important and relevant for the youth sector of the Council of Europe to link this seminar with its training strategies. This is why the seminar on E-learning preceded the 6<sup>th</sup> Consultative Meeting of the Trainers Pool, a biannual meeting of the trainers with whom the youth sector works regularly. Several participants in the E-learning seminar attended the Trainers Pool meeting and shared further reflections with their peers. In line with the E-learning seminar, during the Trainers Pool Consultative Meeting participants could improve their skills in E-learning, as the programme included a one-day workshop on the concrete use of the Moodle platform of the youth sector. This workshop, in its concreteness and user-oriented approach, complemented the E-learning seminar, which had a more conceptual and broad approach to the educational aspects involved in E-learning.

For the full list of participants, please check the Appendix.

## Programme of the seminar

### 29 November 2011

Arrival of participants

20:30 Welcome evening

### 30 November 2011

09:15 Getting into the topic

11:00 *Coffee break*

11:30 Input on “Quality criteria for E-learning – A glimpse at recent research and relevant literature”  
- **Andreas Karsten**, expert from nonformality.org

13:00 *Lunch*

14:30 Conclusions of the study on the quality criteria for E-learning and non-formal education -  
**Mara Georgescu**, Youth Department of the Council of Europe

15:30 Working groups on E-learning in non-formal education

17:30 Plenary presentation of the findings of the working groups

19:00 Dinner

20:30 Sharing of practices

### 1 December 2011

09:15 Opening

09:30 Input on quality in non-formal education – **Rui Gomes**, Youth Department of the Council of Europe

11:00 *Coffee break*

11:15 Working groups on E-learning in intercultural non-formal education

13:00 *Lunch*

14:30 Working groups on E-learning in intercultural non-formal education

16:00 *Coffee break*

16:30 Presentation of the guiding principles elaborated by the working groups  
Conclusions and follow-up  
Evaluation and closing

20:00 Boat trip and dinner on the Danube, together with participants in the Trainers Pool  
Consultative Meeting

### 2 December 2011

Departure of participants

## Seminar sessions and detailed outcomes

### Getting into the topic

*30 November, 9.15 – 11.00*

The meeting started with welcome words and a round of introductions of seminar participants. Rui Gomes, the Head of Education and Training Division of the youth sector of the Council of Europe, addressed the participants and explained the rationale and scope of the seminar.

He explained the progression of E-learning in the youth sector of the Council of Europe. In previous experiences of the youth sector with E-learning, there has been a significant changing of the threshold from, for example, the ACT-HRE training courses in which participants had to fulfil some 80 % of the tasks online to a situation in which lower standards of participation online were acceptable by the end of the course. Rui also explained the choice of the seminar title, by the three concepts involved “intercultural learning”, “E-learning” and “non-formal education”. Each one of them includes an ongoing debate. Only recently, in a symposium in November 2011, the recognition of non-formal education was again discussed and different points of view emerged. Something to keep in mind from these debates is to find a balance when confronted with the dilemma of validation and recognition versus creativity.

Another point Rui addressed is the specific features of E-learning, where “e-” stands still for electronic. The landscape today of E-learning platforms shows a rapid evolution and this something that impacts the provision of E-learning activities. Rui explained that the seminar seeks to look into this aspects. For this reason, and not only, the seminar is to be thought as a place where different experiences converge, where dilemmas and solutions are discussed and possible criteria for quality are identified.

Following this welcome address, participants engaged in an interactive exercise where their similarities and differences opened already a space for dialogue and exchange. During the “All those who...” exercise participants discussed their perception and experiences in relation to questions as:

- whether E-learning is incompatible with non-formal education
- whether they spend more than 8 hours a day online
- whether online learning can tackle feelings etc.

The morning followed with the introduction of the programme, aims and objectives of the seminar. Participants also revisited the short E-learning activities that were carried out before the seminar, as “appetisers”. These activities included:

- participants had to update their profile
- participants could use the forum and the blog to exchange their previous experiences with E-learning
- participants could get involved in a debate on the characteristics of E-learning

The next step of the morning was to have small group discussions on how the seminar participants:

- make use of E-learning in their work
- what their role is in E-learning
- what are their main relevant questions regarding E-learning

To summarise the outcomes of this discussion, participants were to a general extent making use of E-learning in their professional life either as trainers, organisers or tutors. A few participants used E-learning for formal education, while a vast majority used it for non-formal education activities. Experiences around the tables were relatively diverse. Some used platforms, some not (ning, moodle or self-developed platforms). Some thought of E-learning and of blended learning as part of their



## Quality criteria for E-learning: a glimpse at recent research and relevant literature

by Andreas Karsten, expert from nonformality.org

30 November, 9.30 – 13.00

Andreas Karsten's lecture aimed at mapping existing research and literature on the topic of evaluation of E-learning and quality criteria. His input was based on one of his most relevant experiences with E-learning, namely the MA of European Youth Studies, where he had been head of the IT team.

Andreas started his input by making his audience aware that the topic he was about to address is still rather unsettled, thus no magic can be expected. For E-learning in particular, innovation happens at the borderline between formal and non-formal education, thus in the non-formal sector the question of quality in E-learning is at best at the beginning of some sort of exploration.

Andreas introduced first the terrain of quality standards. He identified first the main gaps, namely:

- a complete lack of any evaluation – or attempts to evaluate – pedagogic approaches of E-learning.
- a complete lack of any evaluation – or attempts to evaluate – curricular approaches of E-learning.

The focus until recently has been on functionality. Another missing aspect enquired until now has been non-formal education.

When looking at models of quality evaluation in E-learning, Andreas identified:

### 1. Ulf-Daniel Ehlers<sup>6</sup>, **4 Steps of Quality Development**

Step 1: Needs Analysis

Step 2: Decision Phase

Step 3: Realisation Phase

Step 4: Incorporation Phase

### 2. Graham Atwell's **5 Clusters of Quality Variables**<sup>7</sup>

#### 1: Individual learner variables

- physical characteristics
- learning history
- learner attitude
- learner motivation
- familiarity with the technology

#### 2: Learning environment variables

- the physical learning environment
- the organisational environment
- the institutional environment
- the thematic environment
- the personal environment

#### 3: Contextual variables

- socio-economic factors
- the political context
- cultural background
- geographic location

#### 4: Technology variables

- hardware
- software
- connectivity

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<sup>6</sup> Ulf-Daniel Ehlers (2005). "What Do You Need for Quality in E-learning in Higher Education?"

<sup>7</sup> Graham Attwell (2006). "A framework for the evaluation of E-learning."

- used media
  - mode of delivery
- 5: Pedagogic variables
- learner support systems
  - level of accessibility
  - methodologies
  - flexibility
  - learner autonomy
  - selection, recruitment
  - assessment, examination
  - accreditation, certification

### 3. Ulf-Daniel Ehlers<sup>8</sup> **7 Fields of Quality in E-learning**

- 1: Tutor Support
- 2: Cooperation and Communication
- 3: Technology and technical requirements
- 4: Costs - Expectations - Value
- 5: Information transparency
- 6: Course structure and sequence
- 7: Didactics and methodology

### 4. Insung Jung<sup>9</sup> **7 Learner's Dimensions of Quality**

- 1: Interaction
- 2: Staff Support
- 3: Institutional QA Mechanism
- 4: Institutional Credibility
- 5: Learner Support
- 6: Information and Publicity
- 7: Learning Tasks

### 5. Swedish National Agency for Higher Education<sup>10</sup> - **10 Dimensions of Quality**

- 1: material/content
- 2: structure/virtual environment
- 3: communication/cooperation
- 4: student assessment
- 5: flexibility and adaptability
- 6: support for students and staff
- 7: staff qualifications and experience
- 8: vision and institutional leadership
- 9: resource allocation
- 10: holistic and process dimension

### 6. E-xcellence Project - **33 Benchmarks on E-learning - Six benchmark areas**

- strategic management
- curriculum design
- course design
- course delivery
- staff support
- student support

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<sup>8</sup> Ulf-Daniel Ehlers (2005). "Quality in E-learning from a Learner's Perspective"

<sup>9</sup> Insung Jung (2010). "The dimensions of E-learning quality: from the learner's perspective."

<sup>10</sup> Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (2008). "E-learning quality aspects and criteria for evaluation of E-learning."

Drawing conclusions from this state of art, Andreas stated that:

- Research on E-learning is focused on formal education
- Quality is not (yet) about learning
- Quality criteria do not (yet) capture what makes E-learning successful
- Learning environments are not (yet) about the learner – they are about management.

In the second part of his input, Andreas brought in another perspective on how E-learning changed the learning landscape, learning and learners alike. A first important impact is in the formation of digital identities - multi-faceted, contextualised, inconsistent, fragmented, organic, chaotic. Pointing out the proliferation of online media and applications, the question to raise is where the place of non-formal education and intercultural education can be in this landscape. A first answer to this concerns the way technology is configured – the example of personal learning spaces or environments is telling for the way learning can be personalised.

E-learning brought velocity in the process of changing patterns, from relationships vs. content, individual vs. collective, collaboration vs. complexity, distributed vs. centralised, diversified vs. universal. Another aspect where E-learning had impacted the learning world is in the area of main questions, for example aspects as private vs. public, transparent vs. protected, accessibility vs. control, personalised vs. certified, ownership vs. openness are widely discussed in relation to online learning. E-learning has also transformed the role one takes in a learning process, making the following tensions more acute: facilitating vs. educating, teaching vs. learning, researching vs. publishing, assessing vs. certifying, controlling vs. empowering.

The question of power in a network is also important in E-learning.

### *four forms of power in networks*

Networking



the power from inclusion over those who have been excluded

Network



power accrues from standards defining who may be included

Networked



the unique power people exercise over each other in a network

Network-making

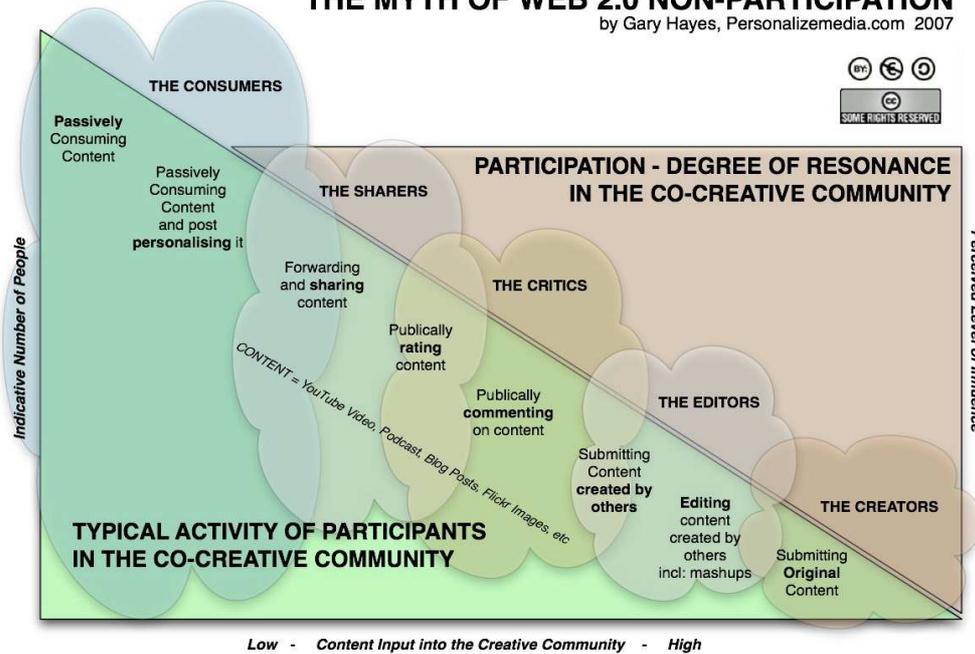


the power to program networks and create strategic alliances

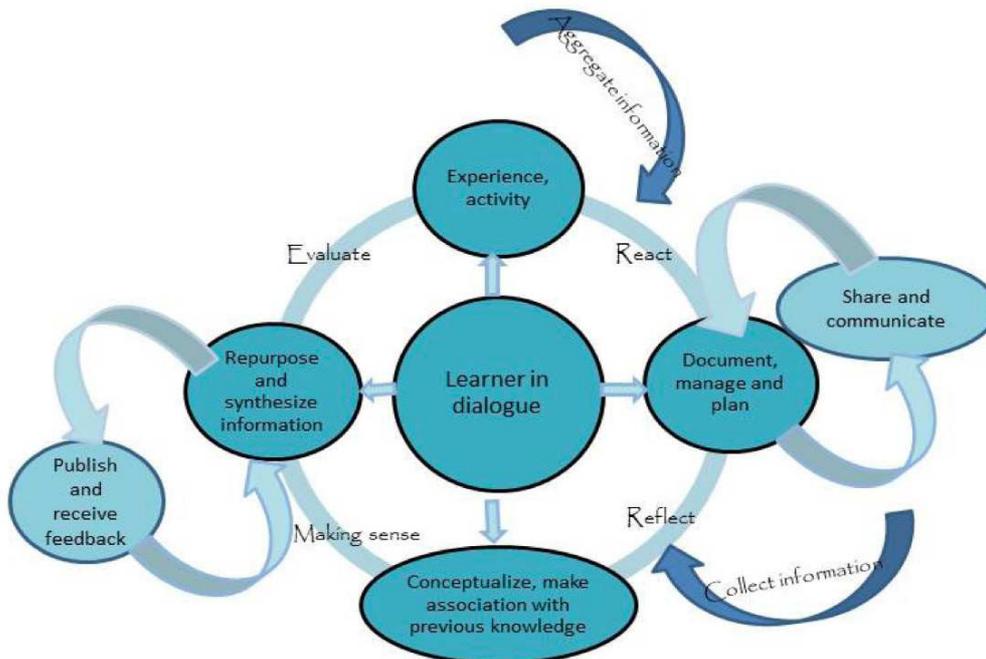
E-learning has also produced changes in the ways learners are empowered.

## THE MYTH OF WEB 2.0 NON-PARTICIPATION

by Gary Hayes, Personalizemedia.com 2007



Complexity in E-learning has brought about the conditions for learning as such to change.



Consequently to the change in paradigm and learning *per se*, communities of practice are impacted and change. Groups evolve into networks.

All these changes, Andreas concluded, are in a dramatic tension with the way E-learning is still perceived: “*We create silos. We think in activities. We think of groups. We are not consistent. We are not present*”. The questions of encapsulated platforms vs. the openness of Internet potential, activities vs. learning spaces, groups vs. networks, consistency in values and practices, being presence online permanently or not are at stake when discussing quality.

## Quality criteria for E-learning and non-formal education: a study

Mara Georgescu, Youth Department of the Council of Europe

30 November, 14.30 – 15.30

Mara introduced some questions and discussion points as an appetiser for working groups during the afternoon. As the study conducted by the youth sector of the Council of Europe was not finalised by the time of the seminar, the input from the study was mostly conveyed in terms of food for thought and starter of a discussion with the group of participants.

Mara introduced the scope of the study as firstly, to “map” at least 7 E-learning platforms and conduct interviews with practitioners looking for the existing practices related to quality criteria in E-learning. The study will build as well on the outcomes of the seminar and will propose tentative quality criteria for E-learning in non-formal intercultural learning activities.

Mara presented the provisional findings of the study until that moment. The methodology for conducting the study was to put on the “glasses” of non-formal education principles and see how they are reflected in E-learning. The study identifies the main achievements and areas of concern and propose quality criteria.

The different characteristics of non-formal education identified, together with relative findings from E-learning are:

### a. Non-formal education as a participatory and learner-centred process

- Learners’ needs identified through mentoring, seminars, previous needs analysis
- Participants have a choice in learning among different activities, freedom to move and different spaces in the platforms
- It is not very clear which the place of evaluation in planning further learning is, but there is a genuine interest/dedication in taking into account participants’ needs when planning learning

### b. Non-formal education as a learning process relevant to participants’ context

- Yes, contexts are incorporated in the activities (e.g. “sharing realities” type of activities is quite popular online), from realities to learning and then back to realities
- There is a tension between conceptualisation vs. freshness
- The exception is that participants initiate an activity in their “offline” context and report about it through E-learning
- The context is reported in E-learning exclusively through writing. Other formats are the exception and rather rarely used

### c. Non-formal education as a experiential and learning-by-doing process

- Yes, declaratively E-learning promotes learning by doing
- The rule is to have task-based learning – a task is proposed, participants do it, they learn by doing it – is this learning by doing? Yes. Is this experiential learning? This is questionable.
- There are ongoing questions of participants’ autonomy – experience is provoked and has clearly defined borders
- Often, experiences do not go up to the end of the cycle – not reapplied again coherently through E-learning or in other ways

### d. Non-formal education as a process where balanced coexistence and interaction between cognitive, affective and practical dimensions of learning are embedded

- Most of the courses mix these dimensions, but affective and practical dimensions of learning remain unrepresented. There are important limitations of interface when it comes to dealing with emotions online
- Methods based on writing are the most common

- There is, however, a growing diversity, for example synchronic meetings, using other channels of communication not only writing, mindmaps, videos, e-campaigns, e-consultations

**e. Non-formal education as a process that links individual and social learning, as well as cooperation-oriented and symmetrical teaching/learning relations**

- Individual and group dimensions are represented in learning activities
- The role of trainers in relation to learners is symmetrical, but also asymmetrical as there is sometimes a fixed framework and not always transparent choices in learning offers
- Self-directed learning approaches are implemented to a limited extent. From this perspective, participants' contributions to the learning process are not the only the learning outcome, but also the learning input. This is rather the exception in the platforms analysed

**f. Non-formal education as a holistic process, in which the process itself counts as a learning input**

- There are shortcomings in applying holistic learning: limitations of the platforms, fragmentation of content and tasks, unsmooth transition between learning units, insufficient customisation, etc.
- There is a tension between process-oriented learning online and task-based learning
- The suggestion is to improve the emphasis on evaluation, consolidation of learning and monitoring (e.g. through support measures as mentoring or tutoring) and pay attention to transition to further learning

**g. Non-formal education as a process that aims to convey and put into practice the values and skills of democratic life**

- There is little explicit negotiation of how to do things with the learners, involving and empowering learners in the way the learning process is developed
- There is a growing need for co-responsibility – if participants do not participate, whose responsibility is it?

**h. Non-formal education as a voluntary and open-access process**

- Platforms are not open in general to those who are not part of the courses' participants
- There is a tension between voluntary participation and lack of participation online based on a voluntary decision
- Accessibility is still limited, for a diversity of reasons, starting with access to Internet up to disability, learning preferences etc.

From the study and referring specifically to the platforms and practitioners consulted, Mara drew some provisional conclusions, as follows:

- Not all the courses online are the same (blended learning, complementary to residential activities, "pure" E-learning)
- There are mostly asynchronous activities, with some exceptions
- The ratio of tutors, mentors, trainers supporting participants in their learning and with technology varies from 1:5 to 1:10
- Platforms include individual and group tasks, with flexible timing
- The certification of learning is still a process under development, taken up only in some courses
- E-learning platforms have a diversity of functions: deepening participants' knowledge, keeping the group together, gathering the documentation, consolidating individual and group learning etc.
- In most of the platforms analysed there is a defined threshold for participants to spend on the platform (e.g. 2 hours a week...)

<b>Success factors</b>	<b>Ongoing challenges</b>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Users are facilitated to navigate through the platforms</li> <li>• There is a variety of learning tools offered, as well as exciting and thought-provoking assignments</li> <li>• There is a constant personalised feedback for learners, adjusted to their learning needs</li> <li>• Trainers are trained to use and develop E-learning.</li> <li>• The platforms are used to deliver content that cannot be delivered during a residential meeting</li> <li>• The E-learning activities also seek to develop learners' ICT skills</li> <li>• There are learning support measures in place (e.g. mentoring, tutoring etc.)</li> <li>• There is a good balance between interactive activities and individual ones</li> <li>• There is an ongoing customisation of E-learning platforms to become learning environments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to the Internet</li> <li>• Difficulty of learning on the basis of reading and a difficulty to express oneself by writing</li> <li>• Unrealistic expectations about the E-learning courses from trainers and organisers</li> <li>• Inadequate software and insufficient customisation</li> <li>• Differences in digital literacy within a global audience. We do not all live in 2.0 era and in some cases there are also ethical reasons for this.</li> <li>• Continuity, motivation</li> <li>• "Reading mode" vs. active participation</li> <li>• Asynchronicity vs. group learning</li> <li>• Disparate tools, incoherent tools, not reflected on from the participant's perspective</li> </ul>
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## Working groups on E-learning in non-formal education

30 November, 15.30 – 18.30

Participants divided in six working groups, where they identified achievements and challenges in using E-learning as a tool for non-formal learning, differentiated by the eight principle areas of non-formal learning from the preparatory study. More concretely, in the working groups participants shared and discussed:

- their experiences with this particular aspect of non-formal education
- the achievements that E-learning can produce on this topic
- the challenges related to the given topic, contextualised and made concrete by the experiences of the participants in the seminar

### A. Working Group on 'E-learning as a process-oriented learning'

The group first discussed the understanding of holistic learning. What is holistic? Some answers were:

- Interdisciplinary approach to learning
- Head, heart and hands involved in the learning process, putting emphasis on the process
- Holistic includes not only the process, but also a result
- Participants are taking into account the complexity of the human person working on different levels
- The learning process is based on an analysis of all aspects of the process: feelings, concepts, results, etc.
- There are symmetrical relations between teachers/trainers/facilitators and learners
- All senses are involved in learning
- The learning is linked with the broader context of participants' lives
- The learning process takes into consideration personal peculiarities

As a result of this reflection, in the group's understanding, a holistic and process-oriented E-learning has to be both learner-oriented and process-oriented. In this respect, E-learning is an additional tool.

Achievements	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The example of the Camp "YES" of the youth international organisation Youth for Understanding. There was a group building realised through E-learning by the creation of shared framework preparing workshops and giving feedback.</li> <li>• Through E-learning, the military and members of "Doctors without borders" had to work together.</li> <li>• Through E-learning initiatives, Israeli and Palestinian had tools to analyse their interpretation of history. Before this course participants did not even accept to be together in the same room.</li> <li>• In the long-term training of trainers TALE, participants knew each other from residential seminar and then, once a climate of sympathy was created, this helped co-operation in E-learning. Also, in TALE participants could criticise the assignments online in order to have their learning needs addressed more.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The question of appropriate methods. For example, there are fewer e-methods for participants to acquire skills than in residential settings.</li> <li>• In some cases it can be just a first step for holistic learning, but it needs to be complemented by offline activities.</li> <li>• Lack of responsibility by participants, as it is easy to shift from online to offline. Nobody writes an E-learning course in their agenda. It seems that participants' perception is that E-learning is something accessible all the time.</li> <li>• There is an inability to control the situation fully, looking at E-learning from an organiser's perspective. We don't know all the context where participants are, their commitments, their daily life problems.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An example is the possibility given to participants in some E-learning activities to choose the assignments and contact organisations. In this case, the moderator needs to be proactive.</li> <li>• Example of E-learning activities that allow for preparatory meetings to be organised via Skype.</li> <li>• E-learning is useful when it creates a comfort zone for those who feels uncomfortable in group setting.</li> <li>• E-learning gives an opportunity to develop writing skills.</li> <li>• E-learning allows to establish common ground among participants, for example by giving them readings before the course.</li> <li>• E-learning is also a good tool for training volunteers in an organisation and to manage their involvement.</li> </ul>	
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### **B. Working Group on ‘E-learning: Aims to convey and practice the values and skills of democratic life’**

Participants in the working group emphasised that the governance of the platform is very important and this is part of the learning process. Learners have to be critical users. Values have to always be integrated in the course, also through the way the learning environment is customised. For example, etiquette and ground rules – the issue of shouting online – are more important to be defined in E-learning than in face-to-face training. We need to always have a space to discuss this in E-learning.

The group raised the question whether Internet is a more equalitarian place than residential settings. The power status is different, but power relations still exist and there needs to be a way to regulate this power, therefore the importance to clarify and re-define the roles (whose responsibility is it when people do not engage?). There is often an expectation from the learners to be responsible, but also from trainers to create a good learning environment. Can we create an environment for everybody to engage (minority and majority, disadvantaged groups)?

Another question the group identified is whether E-learning is more or less spontaneous than face to face learning? For example, in E-learning we try to interpret the message and the emotions, only using the written language. Online you can control what emotions you are sharing or not. There is a culture of communication and an e-non-verbal communication. These are issues organisers or E-learning and trainers need to consider.

Other findings of this working group were:

- There are actually some things that are easier to do online.
- There are specific competences that trainers need, but also specific competences for learners (what about developing practical tips for learners in E-learning?).
- One aspect to consider is online communication, as E-language is very specific and, particularly in collaborative forms (e.g. wiki, forums), the trainer has actually less control than in face-to-face interactions.
- Social intervention – we always need to integrate a social dimension in E-learning. Social intervention can be prepared online, but it is done with real people. So E-learning supports it, but does not stand for itself.
- Political correctness – face-to-face you can explain yourself if you have made a bad joke, but online, it just stays there. Online, people tend to react more on

inappropriate/racist comments that face-to-face! Which can be a plus for E-learning and a learning opportunity.

- The importance of discussing ethical framework and consideration of using E-learning tools.
- Transparency – how transparent are you with sharing feedback?
- How much can we address to the context and social and cultural realities of the learners?

### C. Working group on ‘E-learning: Linking individual and social learning’

The group defined the different aspects of the topic, as:

- 1) Individual and group learning
- 2) Learning in context and in our actual society
- 3) CooperativE-learning
- 4) Symmetrical relation facilitator-learner

Participants in the group shared their previous experiences. One of the participants is a coordinator and tutor as a first experience in a blended course on didactical methodology and ICT tools for teachers. One participant is a coordinator of E-learning on a university platform. Another participants uses Moodle platforms to present curricular content to students. One participant is organising E-learning courses for the preparation of future volunteers that will live soon in different countries, as well as E-learning courses on agriculture using Moodle. Other participants are using blended learning in non-formal education activities or internal training of their organisation.

Achievements	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixing individual and team tasks in order to promote individual and group learning</li> <li>• The existence of tutors that guide/facilitate the learning process and motivates participants</li> <li>• Participants can co-create knowledge starting from the input given by the teacher/trainer</li> <li>• Young people are more willing and motivated to create content together</li> <li>• Forums are also fostering social learning</li> <li>• Group tasks require also leadership and it is important to have groups with a leader, so that responsibility sharing is more effective</li> <li>• New tools that aggregate blogs to the learning platform, so a more personal input can be used</li> <li>• More and clearer instructions than in offline learning</li> <li>• Wikis are a good example of cooperation online and this method cannot be transferred to residential seminars with the same success</li> <li>• It is important to evaluate constantly the group process and dynamics through E-learning</li> <li>• E-learning offers more time span for searching for information, searching definitions, complementing knowledge and continuing to work and share with the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The course framework is often created by the coordinator-trainer and mentor and during the course students don't have the space to change it</li> <li>• How to involve the participants who prefer individual tasks in the group tasks. Individual and social learning are connected with solidarity and sharing, thus there is a need to also develop this attitudes in learners towards the process and their peers</li> <li>• What kind of methodology can we use to assess the social dimension of learning? E-learning gives a different pattern to learning, thus it is necessary to find different methods of learning online, not only coping the usual non-formal methods in E-learning</li> <li>• E-learning needs to be more structured as the people are not face-to-face. Time is also an issue as information requests are not arriving immediately to the person and this may create breakdowns in communication</li> <li>• Tensions between self-directed learning and the cooperative learning, which in E-learning is rather difficult to put at the service of a learning process</li> </ul>

<p>group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use multilingual platforms to achieve a better language outreach</li> <li>• In blended learning courses, in which participants meet before they start E-learning, it is important to address the issues of ownership and co-responsibility and redimension expectations, if necessary</li> </ul>	
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#### **D. Working group on ‘E-learning: Experiential and oriented to learning by doing’**

The group started with a round of introductions and sharing of experiences. One participant works as an educator with young media makers, and as developer/designer of the MA European Studies non-formal platform. One participant is involved in a youth organisation using non-formal learning and has used online learning as a student and developer on topics such as competence based skills and assessments. Some participants have both participant and trainer experiences in non-formal blended learning courses, both long-term and short-term. The topics addressed by the working groups participants online are mostly topics linked to human rights education, intercultural understanding, competences, quality, migration, identity, participation, gender, networking, conflict resolution, etc.

<b>Achievements</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Profiling (the example presented by Andres in his presentation)</li> <li>• Ensure continuity – not to split the work into before, after and during, but rather keep them all linked (especially when working with blended learning). This also includes not to “just” upload the presentation online as part of E-learning (as it is not)</li> <li>• Make it attractive/creative to approach a task (video, photos, blogs, etc.). You can also let people choose their preferred method for completing the task (or let people choose from a list of options: write, draw, photos, blogs, videos, etc.)</li> <li>• Encourage peer or “buddy” education combined and supported by coaching and mentoring. This would allow for a different exchange of knowledge and experiences among the participants</li> <li>• To keep the participants motivated to continue using E-learning by providing a skill or a certificate that can be used in their immediate work/study environment; in other words, make the learning relevant to their daily life in order to have a complete learning cycle</li> <li>• Establish/support small peer groups to support each other and encourage participants' autonomy</li> <li>• Use simulation games, roles, case studies in order to make it relevant, useful, and practical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using creative and interactive methods similar to those that are used in the face-to-face experience (such as theatre of the oppressed and methods where there is sharing/expression of emotions, body language, etc.)</li> <li>• The level of knowledge and experience of the team in ICT can determine whether or not the E-learning experience is successful (because this reflects in the methods/technologies/tools they can use)</li> <li>• In most experiences trainers/facilitators resort to “writing” texts most of the time because it is the easier way out. There are a lot of insecurities and discomfort (mostly by trainers/facilitators) about tools and methodologies, in addition to time limitations (on the side of the participants and the trainers)</li> <li>• The relationship between participants and the coach is different from face-to-face experiences and sometimes challenging because of the delay in communication (lack of instant feedback/emotions) and also difficult to define “boundaries”</li> <li>• It is difficult to estimate the commitment of the team and participants to invest time and energy to guarantee the quality of the discussions, outcomes, etc.</li> <li>• To keep participants motivated for a long time</li> <li>• Not to be able to consider the different learning styles and capacities (it is mostly</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adapt activities of experiential learning to fit E-learning</li> </ul>	<p>boring, serious, not creative, not using better tools)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The methodology does not include emotions or self-development tools because it is focused on the content not on the learning process</li> </ul>
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### **E. Working group on ‘E-learning: Participatory and learner-centred learning process / A learning process relevant to participants’ contexts / Voluntary and open-access learning process’**

Participants started with a round of introductions, in which it was obvious how diverse participants’ experiences are, for example:

- Several participants are involved as participants or trainers in blended learning courses.
- One participant carries out several short and two-month training courses on business plan development or uses of Internet to catch up with the missed classes; moreover, she runs a large scale EU project including E-learning and how to use it, and uses social media for different youth projects.
- One participant is engaged in E-learning research in the formal education environment.
- One participant works in a resource centre on human rights education, where she focuses on blended learning, using a NING platform where a community of practice has developed.
- One participant had been involved in E-learning by organising learning opportunities for local people outside of the capital city.
- One participant had developed both stand alone E-learning courses and blended courses for a global audience.

Participants tried to answer the question how to ensure participatory learning-centred approaches in E-learning and came up with the following ideas:

- Needs adaptation, through the following tools:
  - Use of questionnaires to a network of trainers on the needs
  - Use of questionnaires in relation to the E-learning platform used
  - In blended learning, residential meetings and needs assessment before they go online, based on discussions
  - Needs assessed based on residential trainings and evaluation discussions
  - Unrealistic expectations in relation to participation online
  - Challenges related to participants living conditions and contexts in terms of security, Internet access, honesty in filling in the applications etc.
  - Time indications to the assignments and exercises
  - Language capacities in relation to written expression as a challenge to learning
  - Disability issues in relation to E-learning
- It is difficult to conceptualise the learning based on participants’ experience sharing, but only in one language, but limitation because of the contexts and understanding
- How can you enable young people sharing their experiences throughout the course?
  - Enabling the debate to flow, explore and share
  - Depends largely on the tools available
  - Don’t we want too much from E-learning?
  - Enlarge the network possibilities, i.e. the SALTO training calendar
- How to assess the use of the knowledge and how it has been applied and used in practice?
  - Social network for alumni – assess the learning after and how to improve the learning online after the course
  - Network of alumni of E-learning that meet once a month and work further on actions
  - Mentoring is crucial in relation to the E-learning mechanisms

- Tools to communicate with participants, Skype groups meetings, platform tools, but importance of phone calls (for process debates, etc.), and even SMS
- Importance of the personal approach, interest, keeping the contact
- Question about Internet access among young people and their motivation to participate
- Online activities in the face-to-face meetings, such as evaluation forms, to provide new tools and exercises
- Creation of guidelines with a step-by-step approach, sent by email

Participants also looked into major questions and burning issues, as follows:

- Meeting of participants' needs
- Challenging participants to be creative, thought-provoking
- Carry out E-learning activities that are relevant to their context
- Encourage participants to be active – appropriate tools, responsibility sharing, trust participants to take initiative, trust-building, different roles to be organised by different participants, support from tutors (phone calls, SMSs), communication tools
- Importance of certificate and the recognition it brings
- Individual and group exercises
- Access to experts

#### **F. Working group on 'E-learning: Balanced coexistence and interaction between cognitive, affective and practical dimensions of learning'**

The group identified general challenges that have to be taken into consideration when designing the content of E-learning, as follows:

- The accessibility of the E-learning platform
- The level of Internet literacy of users according to different countries and areas
- The technical equipment available
- Time flexibility (however, the group concluded that this is mostly an advantage in E-learning)
- The balancing of motivation and competition among participants

Some of the questions that E-learning providers have to take into account are – at the same time – cognitive, emotional and experiential:

- There is in general a high level of expectations when it comes to E-learning, from both participants as well as organisers. How to deal with this when it comes to concretely working with E-learning? How to keep this level of expectations and how to effectively respond to them?
- How to engage learners emotionally in E-learning, so they feel motivated and secure?
- How to make assignments useful for participants with respect to their context?

The group also identified achievements and concrete tips regarding the group main topic, as follows:

- When dealing with learners' motivation, the first session/task in E-learning should not be complicated, for example start with a video introduction or a funny/creative task
- Provide feedback on a regular basis, individual, collective and more formalised feedback based on forms/quizzes and monitor the feedback loops
- Use audio-visual tools as much as possible (video introductions, webinars, Q/A sessions), as they add a human touch to E-learning
- The energy required in E-learning from a facilitator should not be underestimated
- Keep constant contact with people (even outside of the platform – e.g. e-mails) in order to keep participants motivated
- Ensure clear structure and transparency in the online programme, in the content etc.
- Identify ways to overcome technical obstacles, for example by creating video tutorials or by providing other examples/support

- Identify from the very beginning of the preparatory process ways to overcome barriers (for example, how to deal with the feelings on not being safe online) and ways to build the trust in the group of participants (for example, by defining clear rules, e.g. do not upload anything that your government should not know, in the case of human rights issues)
- Specialised training for online instructors is needed and it should not only be technically oriented
- Do not forget that practice shows that the content of residential courses cannot be automatically transferred to the online environment.

## **Sharing of practices**

*30 November, 20.30 – 22.30*

Participants shared informally information about their ongoing practices and E-learning experiences.

The main experiences discussed were:

- the MA in European Studies
- the Network University courses
- the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe experiences

## Input on quality in non-formal education

Rui Gomes, Youth Department of the Council of Europe

1 December, 9.30 – 11.00

Rui Gomes introduced at first the work of the youth sector of the Council of Europe, within the whole youth policy framework whose aim “is to provide young people, i.e. girls and boys, young women and young men with equal opportunities and experience which enable them to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in all aspects of society” (Council of Europe Agenda 2020).

Rui reminded the audience of some aspects which are at the heart of why the youth sector of the Council of Europe promotes non-formal education. Non-formal education takes place in a variety of settings and contributes to the self-development of young people and their social, cultural and professional integration. It supplements, sometimes replaces, formal education. It develops important life-long learning skills. It develops citizenship skills and attitudes. It is flexible, it is cheap and it is efficient.

Rui also drew some lines between formal and non-formal education, underlining both the differences and similarities between the two. While formal learning takes place within an institution, is structured around clear curricula and learning objectives, includes assessment and evaluation, tends to be “normalised” and it leads to recognition, diplomas and certification, non-formal education has a planned programme, occurs outside but complementary to formal curricula, it is based on voluntary participation, it is systematically evaluated and claims to be not formal.

Some of the core features of non-formal education were defined as:

- purposive learning
- diversity of contexts
- different and lighter organisation of provision and delivery
- alternative/complementary teaching and learning styles
- less developed recognition of outcomes and quality

Its main values are:

### Personal development

- Autonomy
- Critical attitude
- Openness and curiosity
- Creativity

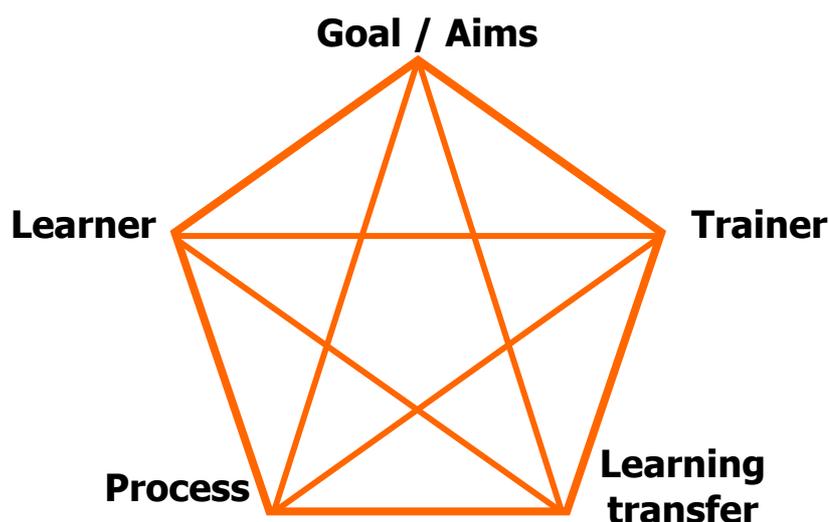
### Social development

- Communication capacity
- Participation and democratic citizenship
- Solidarity and social justice
- Responsibility

When looking at the specificities of the pedagogy promoted and implemented by the European Youth Centres, this stems around the following points<sup>11</sup>:

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<sup>11</sup> The source is the report of a consultative meeting on the education activities of the EYCs



In line with this pedagogy, quality was defined by the youth sector of the Council of Europe as *minimum* standards and definitions related to the essence or type of activities. It refers to what should be in certain activities and also relates to how they are prepared, delivered and evaluated. In this context, quality standards serve as an assurance to all partners concerned that the stated aims and objectives of a given activity are adequately defined and will be pursued so as to be made fully achievable.

The quality standards in non-formal education activities of the youth sector include:

1. a relevant needs assessment;
2. concrete, achievable, assessable objectives;
3. the definition of competences addressed and learning outcomes;
4. the relevance to the Council of Europe values and priorities in the youth field;
5. an adequate and timely preparation process;
6. a competent team of trainers;
7. an integrated approach to intercultural learning;
8. adequate recruitment and selection of participants;
9. a consistent practice of non-formal education principles and approaches;
10. adequate, accessible and timely documentation;
11. thorough open process of evaluation;
12. structurally optimal working conditions and environment;
13. adequate institutional support
14. visibility, innovation and research.

These quality standards guide mostly implicitly the activities in the youth sector and are not structurally assessed throughout the activities.

This often leads to the question, very relevant also in the E-learning context, if *we can say what we do and at the same time do what we say*.

Rui also proposed to the audience the reflection of Peter Lauritzen, when referring to the youth sector as a field of “father killers”; anything older than three years simply “has to go”. This means also that it *is not possible to discuss education outside the political/social climate of a given time*. At the current moment, an important concern regards the ability to reflect on the Internet governance and issues and their implication to human rights and citizenship.

## Working groups on E-learning in intercultural non-formal education

1 December, 11.30 – 13.00, 14.30 – 17.00

Before moving into these working groups, participants shared their own understanding and use made of “quality” in their organisations’ work. Understandings differ and set themselves on a continuum that covers institutional, educational, intuitive, result-oriented, evaluation aspects, and more quality insurance, quality control systems, quality in the competences of educators involved. This diversity of understanding of quality within the group of seminar participants was an appetiser for working on specific topics afterwards, keeping in mind the multi-faceted concept of quality.

Participants divided in four working groups whose scope was to capitalise the outcomes of the first day of seminar (the theoretical background, the outcomes of the in progress study, the main challenges, questions and achievements from participants’ experiences) in order to discuss and propose specific suggestions and guidelines for the area of each working group and follow-up proposals.

### A. Working group on ‘Guidelines for Quality criteria for E-learning non-formal intercultural learning activities’

The scenario and questions for this group were:

*You are preparing guidelines for quality criteria for E-learning non-formal intercultural learning activities. You can use as a starting point defining criteria for the different aspects of E-learning non-formal intercultural learning activities:*

- a) *E-learning,*
- b) *Intercultural learning,*
- c) *Non-formal learning.*

*For each of these areas, identify quality criteria as minimal standards, starting in first place with E-learning and taking intercultural learning and non-formal education from the E-learning perspective/dimension. For each quality criterion, identify how you can verify that the criterion is realised or not – this way, try to identify indicators!*

The group started firstly to reflect on the purpose of defining quality standards, the rationale of the interest in quality standards, as well as more practical questions regarding the use made of quality standards and their scope.

Some of the answers to these questions in the group were:

- quality standards used for giving orientation to course developers, possibly as “to do list” or “don't forget list”
- quality standards as minimum requirements from participants in E-learning courses
- quality standards as an “utopia” where we would like our projects to go
- checklists regarding how to develop E-learning helping to revise and adjust the processes involved in the educational offer
- quality standards as basis for research
- using quality to check the feasibility of future projects

An important reflection in the group regarded the challenges met when developing something that would apply at European level, as Europe is so different and the countries are so different. The challenge is how to develop criteria that fit into the different situations.

The group brainstormed on what needs to be in the quality criteria and identified two categories:

- *aspects related to the actors/processes involved (learning, instructors, facilitator, technical support, stakeholders, etc)*
- *specific aspects regarding the added value of E-learning*

When discussing the positive special and specific features of E-learning, the group concluded that the most important thing for E-learning is the coverage: you can reach and access many people. It became a powerful tool to change society across borders. It gives the opportunity to spread the learning over a longer period of time, it allows learners to plan their learning, it allows the trainer to also update and adapt, it makes their work more flexible, it enhances their tasks: it does not replace other forms of learning but it is an addition.

It is important to be aware of the limitations of E-learning. The expectations on E-learning are often too high and it is important to have a more realistic expectation. It is good for ongoing professional lifelong learning. E-learning is cost effective and provides the space for the intercultural dimension/experience. It allows the learner to better implement the learning in their daily reality (the learning experience is closer to the context). It is more learner focused. It is a way to facilitate participation/entrance to the society. It stimulates digital inclusion (but there is also an element of exclusion). People share in a more open way online. As far as communication is concerned (even if language can be a limitation), in general participants are more participatory in the online environment. It provides a “safer” environment for sharing. It provides new ways/tools of interaction. It provides space for reflection

As far as the limits of E-learning are concerned, the group identified the following:

- it is not for absolute beginners
- it does not always include experiential learning
- it lacks instant feedback
- it lack body language possibilities
- it gives the trainer only limited “control” over the participants and the group to participate
- it does not cover different learning styles
- there are some themes/topics that are harder to train online or could be partially done online
- it can be adapted in a limited way
- access for people with disabilities is difficult
- there are time limitations

The group discussed who the potential quality criteria should reach and identified as target groups providers of E-learning in a non-formal/intercultural environment, policy makers, donors, learners, etc.

Regarding the needs assessment quality criteria, the group identified the following possible criteria:

- needs assessment is based on consultation processes with the target audience
- there is a constant needs analysis
- learners have access to computer/Internet/they are e-literate
- needs assessment considers the aspects of accessibility/disability
- needs assessment considers the outreach of E-learning, in terms of space (geographical location/diversity) and time (availability of participants for learning)
- E-learning is cost effective
- There is a continuum between learning outcomes and intended learning
- Needs assessment consider the aspects of appropriateness/adequacy: needs for capacity building challenge (blended/pure E-learning)
- The organisation has the capacity to deliver E-learning in appropriate conditions

Regarding the aspects concerning the course design and development, the group identified the following possible criteria:

- E-learning has SMART objectives
- Objectives are based on the needs analysis
- The objectives clearly mention the type of learning
- E-learning takes into account the aspect of accessibility - special needs and learning needs
- E-learning takes into account accessibility and digital inclusion (software, and bandwidth, size of documents etc.)
- Time investment required is appropriate

- Time commitment of learners is appropriate
- Learning outcomes are adequate
- Ways of implemented complementarity to residential courses is appropriate
- Course development is adequate in terms of being well structured, timed, and sequenced
- Course development includes appropriate communication of information on the course objectives, approach, programme, workload, methodology
- Criteria for participation and the course requirements (attendance, participation, etc) are appropriately and timely communicated to learners
- Roles within a team are clearly spelled out (administrator, course director, technical person, developers/content, coaching/mentor, facilitator/trainer, experts etc.)
- Course development takes into account the functionality of online infrastructure
- Course development takes into account language specificities of learners and of the educational offer
- Course layout and structure are adequate
- There is a consistent and friendly navigation, in line with needs assessment
- Course development is based on principles of non-formal education – learner-centred, participatory, interactivity, facilitates reflection, keeping in mind the specific limitations with regarding face-to-face learning
- New possibilities for E-learning and existing tools are researched and implemented, when relevant and needed
- Sufficient time and resources are secured for the course design phase (observation - keep in mind how the modules or the course can be “re-used” and has longer time perspective and is not always a one-off experience)

Regarding the aspects of the group dynamics and intercultural learning processes, the group identified the following criteria:

- facilitation/moderation is key
- aspects related to setting of the context and spaces for interaction based on values, ethics (use of language) enabling a debate on how to work together online and setting up a common ground are taken into account
- the learning and working environment are created, clarified and moderated
- participants are made responsible for their learning
- proper information about approaches, structures, expectations, defined responsibilities is provided timely and transparently
- communication with participants takes into account the E-learning dynamics and learners’ participation
- learners are motivated in E-learning processes
- special measures by facilitators are put in place to support participants’ processes of learning
- the monitoring of the learning process is related to the course requirements

Regarding the course content related to intercultural learning, the group identified the following possible criteria:

- organisers and trainers consider the types of E-learning and make a suitable selection of contents
- there is a decision-making process regarding the splitting of responsibilities among the team members and experts in relation to the course tools, assignments, etc.
- the level and amount of text, videos, broadcasts, images, etc. is adequate
- Case-studies and links with participants’ previous experiences and learning are relevant
- Participants’ experience is used and integrated in the learning process
- Participants develop case-studies and good practices
- There is a variety and diversity of materials, references, sources, etc... of approaches in relation to learning styles

## **B. Working group on ‘Learning in E-learning non-formal intercultural learning activities’**

The scenario and questions for this group were:

*Learning is about a balance of development of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Is E-learning providing opportunities for competence development in all these areas?*

- a) *What are the specificities of learning in E-learning non-formal intercultural learning activities?*
- b) *What is E-learning particularly suitable for? For example, is learning in E-learning non-formal intercultural learning activities only good to develop and consolidate knowledge?*
- c) *Moreover, the areas where learning in E-learning non-formal intercultural learning activities is most effective are the areas where we can formulate learning objectives for learners.*

*Please identify and argue for the strong points in favour of using and developing further E-learning usage from an educational perspective (learning outcomes, educational approaches, etc.).*

For this group, the comparison between residential learning and E-learning is not a right starting point since the assumption is that residential courses are working perfectly; however, there are differences in methodology and quality in residential training as well. A crucial point regards attitude change, which is hard to measure both in residential settings and in E-learning. Also, the issue of whether we can already evaluate the quality of E-learning in this stage of its existence is rather unsettles. Next to this, E-learning raises a lot of suspicion on its capacity because it is associated with the Internet and with non-formal education. So the fears are double. One example here is that the same course which was offered through residential settings courses and E-learning (however, with adjusted methodology) created different (perceived) learning outcomes.

The experience shows that the communication in both activities are different. It seems that the communication in E-learning is more open, meaning that people can discuss critical issues more freely. Therefore facilitating can change attitude. Based on the fact that people can spend more time and reflect more on their contributions, the change of attitude may be stronger.

The crucial aspects are the competences of the trainer (like in residential training, but the competences are different) and the capacity to define the right objectives, criteria and methodology, and after that select the appropriate learning tool. A discussion point in the group was what this would mean to adapt the criteria to the selected learning method versus choosing the learning method based on the criteria (where, by learning method we mean the learning space, this includes both E-learning and residential training). E-learning is a tool for which you can choose based on your criteria, resources, capacity.

Some of the questions raised in the group were also:

- What comes first: the learning objectives or the methodology?
- What do you want to achieve?
- How can we achieve it?
- Do we take the limitations of the learning space for granted?

An example from one participant is the way methodologies are chosen when designing a residential course and an E-learning course. When designing residential trainings, there is often an internal platform for creativity in designing the training, however when choosing E-learning this does not seem to happen.

The group agreed that attitude and behavioural change is certainly taking place in E-learning. For example, in the future the new generations will engage with the Internet much more easily and in different ways than today. Moreover, E-learning enables access to people who for whatever reason can not attend residential training to learning opportunities. So we need to focus also on the future.

Technology changes so rapidly but we are not able to look at the whole concept of learning in the new reality and the changing patterns in the usage of ICT tools (the digital natives). In order to answer the question we need to develop new didactical approaches that are not based on the way we used to do

things (in residential trainings), but on the possibilities and opportunities of technology and take into account the future changes.

For instance, E-learning is good for life-long learning purposes because it is flexible, forms attitudes, changes behaviours, can be self-directed (a learner can create their own portfolio), in other words, learners can define their own needs, schedule, and identity. It will be necessary to develop new skills for both trainers and participants in E-learning since most of us are trained to read text from paper etc. Changes may come in the way we structure our mind and in the way we absorb information. To summarise, we will have competent trainers, active learners, and also didactical instructions for the learners.

Other questions addressed were:

- Is Kolb's cycle of experiential learning outdated?
- How does E-learning bring about the different dimensions of learning to know, learning to do, learning to be?
- Is E-learning suitable for all the existent disciplines?

The main issue is to choose for the right method when it is most effective. This leads to the question what are the criteria for effectiveness. Many decisions for residential trainings are made based on the fact that we make a choice on what we know and are used to do. With E-learning, the trainer needs to learn and this will most probably become a change of mindset.

The group concluded that E-learning is not a replacement for residential trainings but an additional tool for learning. The big question is what the criteria are for the choice making process in choosing the methods (residential or E-learning). The group addressed some of the answers to this question, by considering the aspects of:

- time, distance, costs
- analysing competences of alleged target audience (and preferences) and competences of trainers
- availability of technology both for providers and trainers, as well as for learners
- availability of materials (either existing ones or self-developed)
- learning objectives
- the learning process (for instance the emotional aspect of learning)

The group supported the idea of creating a T-kit on E-learning, possibly with an online friendly format.

### **C. Working group on 'Creating a learning environment in E-learning non-formal intercultural learning activities'**

The scenario and questions for this group were:

*You are preparing an E-learning course for intercultural non-formal learning activities. You are preparing the learning environment and need to take into account infrastructural, educational, technological, esthetical perspective, etc.*

- a) What do you need to define already online before the course starts, so that learners can feel safe and comfortable to start the learning process?*
- b) How do you secure accessibility aspects and the navigation aspects?*
- d) How do you react when learners do not show up on the platform?*
- e) Are there minimal requirements for learning online – in terms of time participants spend online, quality of participant input, learning outcomes? How do you define these minimal requirements?*
- g) Are there minimal requirements for trainers online – how do you define these minimal requirements in terms of time spent online, quality of input and feed-back, relation with participants?*
- f) How do you take into account the issue of motivation for learning?*
- g) What about affordability?*
- h) Anything else to keep in mind when preparing this?*

The group identified guidelines for:

### **a) ensuring safety and comfort of learners**

- easy enrolment procedure and subsequent logging in system
- constant summarising of activities – what exactly is expected from a learner to complete needs to be clear
- clear explanation of status of the platform or website used (closed completely from the public, open entirely and self-directed, partly open to the public for resources, closed for participant communication)
- the presence of well-defined timelines
- explanation of the transition from physical group setting to virtual group setting and how this influences the next phases of learning
- enable and communicate security and privacy mechanisms, regarding personal data and content
- define and describe the technical environment (if it is integrated with other platforms or networks, how the platform works in easy to use step by step guides and/or video tutorials)
- be transparent about the methodology – pedagogic approaches
- ensure localization and context (geographic, linguistic, intercultural, taking the specifics of the target group into account, background, sensitivity issues, culture)
- communicate enrolment procedures (optional or obligatory) and be clear about any penalty
- make it clear/easy for the user to ask questions
- allow the user to see the human element of the trainer online (maybe a short introductory video)
- introduce/present the other participants so that the user feels part of a community
- be clear about the accessibility
- consider the look and feel of the environment, more inviting e.g. less textual

The main possibilities or suggestions to the Council of Europe in relation to this issues of safety and security online are:

- Use self-directed learning approaches. Content, objectives, learning paces and structures can be customisable to enable the possibility of restructuring. Customisation and personalisation of the content (define the core, then follow certain personalised elements/units) may go towards ensuring the comfort of the learner (be aware though, that too much choice is sometimes limiting)
- Make use of portfolio of participants' work, to motivate and give a sense of ownership and belonging. This can also be a very good tool for archiving research material and processes. It should be a tool that works across all the Council of Europe's training platforms so that achievements and attendances can be recorded.

### **b) securing accessibility aspects**

- W3c web accessibility guidelines (keyboard shortcuts enabled, bigger text/colour change of text and background, compatible with text to speech software, consistency and simplicity, small file sizes for download times)
- easily downloadable for users with time constraints
- navigation/explanatory video and/or wizard and/or guidelines
- offline version availability for those with restricted Internet access
- ICT competencies should be taken into account – simplicity of use
- small bits of text, not long scrolling pages
- site map to see the whole website sections and topics
- minimise the number of menus
- language – glossary for non-native speakers or field/topic terminology integrated (clickable definitions/translations for instance)
- minimum use of jargon
- test with target users

### **c) navigation aspects**

- clear units – short headings – content specific test

- 3 click rule-oriented – avoiding buried content and many subheadings
- existence of back/home buttons
- crumb trail style menu – a menu that shows you where you are in the site
- simple in visual and practical design
- screen size – no scrolling, breakup in portions
- be clear on the concept of the network – how to link the closed and open spaces
- indicate if anything new has changed since the last time the user visited
- avoid flashing or scrolling icons or text
- some ‘sign posting’ on the first page
- access to archived material

#### **d) managing learners’ attendance online**

- checking mechanisms – how do we measure presence?
- decide how much absence constitutes action e.g.: ask for feedback at certain intervals of time, create small tests/quizzes, assign papers at the end of units
- decide the escalation procedure, what action to take e.g.: communicate – a real contact – phone call for instance, create a synchronous activity, maybe a group Skype/video call
- ensure that the platform is dynamic enough to engage participants
- redesign or restructure the content/design after consultation with participants
- create some animation to re-engage the learner e.g. a video to introduce a new activity or reminder of an old one
- create a peer support mechanism
- evaluation can be used to understand absences, it may be that the learner was engaged in the material but had problems using the platform
- give the learners the opportunity to have personal responsibility for their learning e.g.: to moderate a forum for a unit, agree to distribute responsibilities within the group for certain activities
- keep the environment friendly and human

#### **e) minimal requirements for learners**

- time spent online, quality of the participants’ input, learning outcomes
- the timing and tasks are interconnected and planned in accordance to the objectives
- selection criteria should be very clear about what you require of them
- continual assessment
- games analogy: achieving reward (what for) measured against outcomes
- list for learners what they need to know (minimum input, minimum feedback). In the case of an open course: the responsibility is to themselves to assess their selection criteria. If they are given a test they are able to see if they have learned what is in the unit.

#### **f) minimal requirements for trainers**

- assess the time spent online, quality of input, learning outcomes
- evaluate
- moderate
- inspire and develop discussions
- minimal requirements for animation
- how to comment, react or give feedback
- equality in discussions
- intervention
- keep on track
- mentoring
- be culturally sensitive

#### **g) management of motivation online**

- badges and awards, virtual gifts/awards
- create ownership

- self-assessment quick quizzes
- customisation
- hooks, e.g. mobile phone voting with live results
- follow clear guidelines
- voting by peers
- use edutainment approaches
- indicate what the minimal requirements are for comments on feedback

#### **h) affordability issues**

- open source but content is expensive, to add functionality you need to have the capacity
- to develop a course within a small budget. Can this be done in a cheaper way? Does it impact on your policy?
- appropriate funding
- map resources, define objectives, balance between these
- create a policy for this

### **D. Working group on ‘Competences and curriculum of a training of trainers in E-learning in non-formal intercultural learning activities’**

The scenario and questions for this group were:

*You are in charge of planning a Training course for Trainers who will implement E-learning training activities in non-formal intercultural learning activities.*

*a) What are the competences these trainers should develop during the training course? Refer to the understanding of competences as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes and define as specific suggestions of competences as possible.*

*b) What should the course comprise as curriculum?*

*c) What methodological aspects should be specific to this course?*

*d) Any suggestions regarding the duration, medium used (residential, E-learning etc.) and anything else you consider relevant when planning such a training of trainers?*

The group defined that there are two possible target groups of trainers that could benefit from this training of trainers:

a) training of beginners in all the three aspects, non-formal education, intercultural learning and E-learning

b) advanced training for already competent trainers in non-formal education and intercultural learning with focus on E-learning

The group decided to focus on the second target group, thus the target group for this training of trainers would be trainers that already have average competence in non-formal education and intercultural learning and need to improve their competences in using E-learning for these purposes.

The competences trainers could develop during this training course are:

a) technical competences, as follows:

- technical skills
- knowledge about different platforms
- relevant software/programmes/applications
- how to provide a minimal support/backup
- ability to communicate with IT departments
- competences in social media
- knowledge of available online resources and familiarity with using them
- knowledge about privacy and data protection policies
- competences to work as a trainer with learners who know more about technologies than the trainer himself/herself

b) pedagogical competences, as follows:

- ability to summarise online
- ability to “e-write” and “e-read” (producing texts adjusted to E-learning platforms)
- skills to manage group dynamics
- skills to adapt existing materials to E-learning
- time management skills
- how to motivate people online and available tools
- knowledge of target groups
- online evaluation skills
- online debriefing and monitoring skills
- skills to deal with conflicts in online environments
- skills to deal with cultural diversity and language
- critical thinking
- competences in planning E-learning processes and phases
- to know why/what for to use E-learning

c) research competences, as follows:

- ability to work with online resources
- knowledge and experience with already existing online tools
- knowledge about accessibility and other stakeholder’s policies in this regard (e.g. governments’ point of view)
- basic knowledge on how people learn online
- capacity to networking with other E-learning initiatives

The curriculum was defined as follows:

**a) E-learning introductory phase**

- defining the “contract” and quality criteria for the course, roles of the team and participants
- gathering expectations, contributions and fears
- needs analysis / contexts of participants (organisations, experiences)
- group dynamics – get to know each other activities
- participants’ assessment of ICT skills
- sharing guidelines for producing texts adjusted to E-learning platforms
- introducing guidelines on time to be spent online
- share experiences with online tools / introducing new tools
- introduction to data protection
- research and bibliographic references on the topic
- introduction to E-learning platforms

**b) Residential phase**

- development of participants’ technical skills (continuation of the E-learning introductory phase, but also new ones)
- discussing platforms critically
- introducing back-up and support
- introduction to feedback
- software
- how to include social media in E-learning
- specific skills development: conflict management, mentoring, summarising online, regulations on Internet by governments, adaptation and use of tools (wiki etc.), - dealing with cultural diversity online, evaluation skills
- set up peer support groups
- plan field projects

**c) E-learning and practical phase (developing own projects / field project)**

- implementation of online projects
- feedback and evaluation

- mentoring
- peer support
- continuous self-assessment
- experts on specific topics to be invited for specific sessions online

**d) Residential evaluation phase**

- reflect / learn /evaluate field projects
- practice sharing and challenges
- external experts on specific needs identified meanwhile
- strategies for motivating learners online
- mentor / peer groups
- networking among participants
- follow-up

The group proposed to the Council of Europe to assess the possibility of organising this type of training course, reinforcing the idea of the need of such a course for non-formal youth work in Europe.



## Appendix - Participants List

Surname	First name	Country	Organisation
Demalija	Rifat	Albania	Youth in Free Initiative
Balayan	Gabriel	Armenia	Yerevan State Linguistic University
Minassian	Anahit	Armenia	International Center for Intercultural Research, Learning and Dialogue (ICIRLD)
Ismaylov	Ibrahim	Azerbaijan	The Association of Scouts of Azerbaijan
Gaevskaya	Marina	Belarus	Youth Public Association 'ABC Entrepreneurship'
Dolejsiova	Ditta	Brazil	Universidade da Juventude
Shalayeva	Kateryna	France	Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR), Initiatives of Change
Eradze	Maka	Georgia	Tbilisi State University
Pavlakis	Christoforos	Greece	Information and Communication Institute
Siotas	George	Greece	AKETH - Developmental Centre of Thessaly
Raphael	Dora	Hungary	European Educational Exchanges - Youth For Understanding
Bombara	Domenica	Italy	VIS - Volontariato Internazionale per lo sviluppo
Rodrigues Afonso	Ana Carla	Italy	CEIPES - International Centre for the Promotion of Education and Development
Sylhasi	Veton	Kosovo <sup>12</sup>	Kosovar Association for Human and Children's Rights
Elbers	Frank	The Netherlands	Human Rights Education Associates
Gebara	Caroline	Norway	The European Wergeland Centre
Breda	Sonia	Portugal	HREYN - Human Rights Education Youth Network
Nestian	Oana	Romania	Intercultural Institute
Kulbakina	Tatiana	Russian Federation	International Youth Human Rights Movement
Ivanian	Ruzanna	Russian Federation	Youth information Centre
Zlatkovic	Zoran	Serbia	Organisation of Creative Grouping
Gallikova	Lucia	Slovakia	No Label Project
Anbar	Maram	Spain	Circolo Culturale Africa
Akyuz	Ali Alper	Turkey	Istanbul Bilgi University Centre for Civil Society Studies
Donets	Andriy	Ukraine	Donetsk Youth Debate Centre
Mutare	Lydia	United Kingdom	World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
Goss	Helen	United Kingdom	Wayout Media
Dhalech	Mohammed	United Kingdom	Freelance trainer
Karsten	Andreas	Germany	Expert, Nonformality.org
Klabbers	Vic	North-South Centre, Council of Europe	
Ettema	Menno	Youth Department, Council of Europe	
Pandea	Ruxandra	Youth Department, Council of Europe	
Georgescu	Mara	Youth Department, Council of Europe	
Gomes	Rui	Youth Department, Council of Europe	
Molnar	Zsuzsanna	Youth Department, Council of Europe	

<sup>12</sup> All reference to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.