



7th EUROPEAN PLATFORM of YOUTH CENTRES **Lisbon Youth Centre, Portugal** **22 – 25 February 2016**

General Report and Documentation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 7th European Platform of Youth Centres took place from 22 to 25 February, 2016, at the Lisbon Youth Centre, Portugal, and hosted 35 participants from 25 centres and 20 countries. These included youth centre representatives from Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey. There were also representations from a number of ministries and government organisations, as well as from the European Network of Youth Centres (ENYC), The Network of European Youth Capitals (NEYC), the European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ), the Advisory Council on Youth (AC), and the Council of Europe. Antje ROTHEMUND, Head of the Youth Department, Council of Europe, joined the Meeting on Day 3.

Although there was considerable participant overlap with previous Platform Meetings, new members were also present, specifically representatives from Croatia, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Romania and Spain. Some of the centres represented had already applied for the Quality Label, while some were attending to contribute and share ideas. The hosting centre, Lisbon Youth Centre, Portugal, had been awarded in the summer of 2015 the Quality Label, at an award ceremony which took place at the centre, in the presence of the Prime Minister.

As with previous recent years, it was considered beneficial to other centres to host the Platforms outside Budapest and Strasbourg, and this tradition, following Brežice, Slovenia in 2013, Villa Elba, Kokkola, Finland in 2014, and Sremski Karlovci, Serbia in 2015, continued here with hosting the meeting in Lisbon.

There are now six centres which have been awarded the Quality Label: EuroMed – Turkey (2013-2015, not renewed since), Villa Elba, Kokkola – Finland, Youth Cultural Centre Brežice – Slovenia, Youth Centre 'Eco Center Radulovački', Sremski Karlovci – Serbia, the Lisbon Youth Centre – Portugal, and the Destelheide Centre in Belgium, the two latter since the previous Platform Meeting. The date for the award ceremony for the Destelheide centre was finalised during this meeting, and will take place on location on 19 May 2016. Both candidate youth centres: FITT in Timișoara, Romania and CEULAJ in Mollina, Spain are being awarded by the CDEJ in its next meeting in Budapest, in March 2016.

The aims of this 7th European Platform, with the project now at a mature stage, and in its sixth active year, were to further consolidate the Platform, but also to develop the project, experience the workings of six fully-developed centres, learn more about new centres applying for the Quality Label, and encourage new centre representatives to benefit from the cross-exchange of ideas, expertise and materials, and thus encourage continued and further co-operation on ideas

for future projects in the field of youth between youth centres within Europe. It was also considered specifically important at this 7th meeting to draw further on the experiences and expertise of the labelled centres, and use this both with some representatives of such centres taking a role in a revised Expert Team group, as well as participating in the Quality Label training course in terms of providing input. It was also suggested that this multiplying of expertise could be extended to individual partnership agreements between centres on topics of common interest. This approach also helps validate the ongoing work of already labelled centres in terms of maximising how they can benefit from the Platform Meetings, and associated interim events.

With this in mind, Olaf KÖNDGEN informed participants that a new initiative would be included in the Quality Label project, namely to involve representatives of already labelled centres in a 'pool of experts', a sub-group of the Expert Team, specifically for helping carry out visits to new centres. He also promoted the Quality Label training course, which ran for the first time in 2015, and encouraged participants to suggest topics for including in the second training course. He also mentioned personnel changes within the Expert Team, with both Sergio BELFOR and himself moving on.

With the first two centres being labelled in 2012 (for the years 2013-2015), the initial three-year term is now coming to an end for some centres; 2016 saw the first re-labelling, of the Brežice centre in Slovenia.

The calendar of events for 2016 also includes Quality Label Award ceremonies, visits to potential centres, and the second Quality Label training course, to take place in September 2016 in Budapest.

This year the Platform further developed the idea of interactive activities started at the previous meeting; this was also crucial for the effective handling of a larger number of participants, for information exchange as well as information consolidation. Again, these demonstrated examples of non-formal educational activities used in youth centres (e.g. in *Compass*), and also helped raise participants' awareness of how knowledge, skills and attitudes come into play in such activities. The first of these took place on the morning of Day 1, with a 'Put your hand up if ...' activity (adapted from *Compass* 'Take a step forward'). Participants were then swiftly engaged in linking 2015 Platform Meeting ideas, or issues pertinent to their own centres by focusing on the achievements and challenges of 2015, and what their expectations were of the 7th Platform Meeting.

As with this aspect last year, many participants expressed approval and interest in these interactive sessions. Participants also explained that with the enlarged size of the meeting, it is now neither practical nor effective to run plenary meetings on topics where much can be learnt and exchanged in terms of specific activity ideas; many suggested breaking further into smaller groups in order to make sessions more in-depth, relevant and beneficial to interested parties. The separate working groups for labelled centres, centres familiar with the process and centres new in the process were welcomed and participants encouraged the organisers to give more time to these sessions at future Platform Meetings.

The Platform Meeting also included a recap of bi- and multi-lateral projects that centres have been working on since being initiated firstly in Kokkola, Finland, at the 5th Platform Meeting, and subsequently in Sremski Karlovci, Serbia in 2015 at the 6th Platform Meeting, for discussing both ongoing and newer initiatives. Towards the end of the meeting, participants were asked to finalise how they would proceed with new collaborative projects initiated at this 7th Platform Meeting. (Sergio BELFOR)

Four centre representatives gave short plenary sessions on best-practice ideas as a means of demonstrating one aspect of their work. These were as follows: Mihai Adrian VILCEA from the Timis County Youth Foundation, Timișoara on 'Young people involved in the management of a centre'; Gubaz KOBERIDZE from the Tbilisi European Youth Centre (TEYC) on 'Working with stakeholders in founding a youth centre'; Vasil IVANOV VASILEV from the Youth Centre in Plovdiv on 'Integrating a local Roma community'; Fernanda Maria OLIVEIRA BRITO, from the

hosting IPDJ Lisbon Youth Centre on 'Erasmus+ / strategic partnerships'. In addition, Georges METZ from the Center Marienthal, Service National de la Jeunesse, Luxembourg, spoke on why concepts and mission statements are important, and exemplified how these impact on the effective work happening at his own centre in Luxembourg.

This year, there was also a specific focus on Diversity over two sessions, covering both theory, in terms of how this is seen within the Council of Europe, and the role it plays in the range of activities in our everyday working lives, as well as practice, with participants completing a questionnaire, and then discussing current and future work on this in their own centres. The results of this will pave the way for a stronger implementation of how diversity can be addressed effectively within individual youth centres. (Anca-Ruxandra PANDEA)

During this Platform Meeting, more focus was given to dividing participants into more similar working groups, in order to develop ongoing work more effectively, as appropriate. This enabled centre representatives new to the Platform meeting to learn more about the Quality Label itself, while already labelled centres were able to address issues more pertinent to how centres are labelled, how they can still benefit from attending the meetings, and how they can share their expertise.

The Lisbon Youth Centre was showed-cased throughout the Platform Meeting, with all working sessions held at the centre, and in a range of working rooms. Participants were given a taster of how the centre works with other organisations both through a short presentation, as well as during a short guided tour of the various offices in the building; participants were also able to sit in on a theatre performance in the auditorium on the evening prior to the official opening in the Platform Meeting.

Antje ROTHEMUND responded to discussions about suggestions and support by explaining the aims behind the youth centres, and in turn how the Quality Label came into being, what the Council of Europe's main priorities are, and how centres can be supported from Strasbourg and Budapest.

The overall evaluation of the Platform Meeting by participants was very positive (87%).

It was proposed that the 8th European Platform of Youth Centres should be held at Vormingscentrum Destelheide, in Dworp, Belgium in 2017.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTORY SESSIONS	5
Opening and presentation of the participants – Olaf KÖNDGEN.....	5
Achievements, challenges and expectations – Anca-Ruxandra PANDEA.....	5
Background information and state of affairs – Olaf KÖNDGEN	6
Exchange of information on on-going bilateral projects initiated after the 6th Platform Meeting – Sergio BELFOR	7
Diversity in youth centres (1) – Anca-Ruxandra PANDEA	7
Examples of good practice from the participating centres.....	9
Young people involved in the management of a centre – Mihai Adrian VILCEA, Timis County Youth Foundation, Timișoara.....	9
Working with stakeholders in founding a youth centre – Gubaz KOBERIDZE, Tbilisi European Youth Centre (TEYC).....	9
Integrating a local Roma community – Vasil IVANOV VASILEV, Youth Centre Plovdiv	10
Erasmus+ / strategic partnerships – Fernanda Maria OLIVEIRA BRITO, IPDJ Lisbon Youth Centre	11
Presentation of the Centro de Juventude de Lisboa, Portugal – Fernanda Maria OLIVEIRA BRITO	12
Diversity in youth centres (2) – Anca-Ruxandra PANDEA	12
Separate working groups (Discussions on issues specific to particular youth centres in relation to the Quality Label)	14
Group 1: Labelled centres (moderators: Georges METZ, Péter ZELENKA).....	15
Group 2: Regular attendees, not yet labelled (moderators: Anca-Ruxandra PANDEA, Sergio BELFOR) ...	15
Group 3: Centres new to the label project (moderators: Olaf KÖNDGEN: Djuro BLANUŠA).....	16
Reflecting on work in youth centres, considering the example of Lisbon Youth Centre – giving feedback to our hosts.....	17
Concepts and mission statements – Georges METZ.....	17
Space and time for future bilateral or multilateral co-operation projects – Sergio BELFOR.....	19
Future development of the Quality Label project – Olaf KÖNDGEN.....	20
The Youth Department of the Council of Europe – Antje ROTHEMUND.....	21
Evaluations and conclusions, end of meeting.....	22
APPENDICES	24
Programme.....	24
Evaluation.....	25
Participant List.....	28

INTRODUCTORY SESSIONS

Opening and presentation of the participants – Olaf KÖNDGEN

Olaf KÖNDGEN opened the 7th European Platform Meeting of Youth Centres, the largest meeting to date, explaining the enormous response which had been received to the call for participants. He also explained the need to ensure regular participation of representatives from youth centres, both with and without the Quality Label, as well as to guarantee involvement from centres new to the project.

Olaf introduced the Expert Team of the Quality Label, explaining briefly their role of giving practical advice, as well as undertaking visits to assess new centres.

Achievements, challenges and expectations – Anca-Ruxandra PANDEA

Following a short getting-to-know-you activity, Anca-Ruxandra PANDEA led a session for participants to exchange information about their centres, what their key achievements and challenges had been in 2015, and what their expectations from the Platform Meeting were. Participants were divided into five groups, and asked to summarise the information on flipchart sheets for discussion and circulation; this was then followed by brief open feedback. Groups were country-mixed, often working in very different conditions and backgrounds.

A few salient issues arose. While achievements and challenges varied considerably from centre to centre, expectations were more similar. The following includes some of the main overall ideas:

Achievements in 2015

- an increase in the number of activities being run at the centre
- bringing more young people into the youth centre
- running more international projects
- opening a new centre
- acquiring the Quality Label

Challenges in 2015

- implementing human rights education
- social inclusion
- youth employability
- sustainability
- working with young people to avoid engagement with crime
- the knock-on effects of dealing with the migration crisis, and how to address it
- acquiring funds for / building a centre
- budget cuts, and lack of support from policy makers
- seasonal variations
- keeping the Quality Label

Expectations from the 7th Platform Meeting

- networking and getting to know new colleagues for future collaborative projects
- exchange of ideas
- EU co-operation
- finding out what is happening at the European level.

Background information and state of affairs – Olaf KÖNDGEN

Olaf KÖNDGEN began by highlighting the positive expansion of the Platform Meeting project, mentioning that although a few participating countries were this year not present, the 2016 Platform Meeting saw several new country representatives, and especially welcomed them. From 17 countries in 2015, there are 20 in 2016, and participant numbers at the Meeting have increased from 28 to 35.

Olaf continued by explaining that in order to help handle this growth, a number of features were being included or adapted. First and foremost, the Youth Department continues to support the project and provide necessary resources (including financial support). There are also changes in personnel within the Expert Team, as well as the idea of creating a fourth group: the current three groups (Advisory Council on Youth; the European Steering Committee [CDEJ], and the Secretariat) of the Quality Label will be expanded by adding a pool of experts from participating youth centres, willing to go on mission to evaluate centres.

An additional change was the inclusion of a training course, which first took place in September 2015 in Budapest. Award ceremonies also now take place outside Budapest and Strasbourg, enabling centres to use the ceremony as a PR event within their local environment.

A further new element has now emerged, that of reviewing centres whose initial term of three years is coming to an end. Each of those centres needs an evaluation of where they are after holding the Quality Label for three years; the first review recently took place at the Youth Cultural Center in Brežice, Slovenia.

The addition at the Platform Meetings, since 2015, of the Council of Europe's own educational team representatives (this year Anca-Ruxandra PANDEA) promotes positive methodology as well as providing an insight into what is happening within the Council of Europe.

Olaf encouraged all participants to become members of the Facebook website (started in 2015), a virtual space with information, links to documents and publications of the Council of Europe, as well as Calls to events, and so on. All participants were free to join, and post.

In brief, Olaf outlined the Quality Label calendar for 2016:

- 'end-of-term visit' to Youth Cultural Center Brežice, Slovenia, to continue holding the Quality Label
- March: joint council meeting, and discussion of two Quality Label recommendations: CEULAJ / Mollina in Spain, and Timisoara in Romania (2016-18); award ceremony dates to follow
- April: first Expert Team visit to the International Youth Centre in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria
- 19 May: Destelheide – Quality Label award ceremony
- September, Budapest: 2nd training course: Olaf mentioned that ideas for topics to include in this would be welcome during the Platform Meeting; he also mentioned that the report on the 1st training course was now available (posted onto the Quality Label Facebook page).
- end 2016: Kokkola – 'end-of-term visit'
- on-going work on other centres and pending applications.

Sergio BELFOR added that the inclusion at the Platform Meetings of ministry representatives, namely key stakeholders, is a positive development, as everything discussed and implemented at youth centres has to go through the ministries. He encouraged participants to use this opportunity to clarify, from both sides, any issues and challenges when working together.

Exchange of information on on-going bilateral projects initiated after the 6th Platform Meeting – Sergio BELFOR

This session related to discussions and projects initiated in Sremski Karlovci, Serbia, at the 6th Platform Meeting in May 2015. The following includes some of those plans, and how they are being realised.

- An official agreement was signed by centre representatives from Luxembourg and Sremci Karlovci in 2015: exchange visits have been and are taking place, and the two centres are in regular contact.
- Villa Elba, Finland and work with Timis County Youth Centre, Romania, on youth working mobility, and partnerships to develop new services within the youth centres, with the aim of having similar Quality Label standards.
- ENYC (the European Network of Youth Centres) have exchanged experiences with youth centres in Finland, Romania, Germany, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey.
- Akdeniz University Euromed Youth Centre are working with Villa Elba, Finland, on partnership building, with Centrum voľného času - Regionálne centrum mládeže, Košice, Slovakia, and are finalising agreements with the Educational-Leisure Centre for Youth Spajalica, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Vormingscentrum Destelheide are working on exchange visits with the youth centre in Brežice, Slovenia, to take place in the summer of 2016.
- Sremski Karlovci youth centre are also working with Spajalica in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- France's Association Carrefour has ongoing volunteer work with Luxembourg and Belgium.

Sergio BELFOR reminded participants that the Platform Meeting is intended to promote the possibility to develop partnerships. He also encouraged participants to post news of their activities to the Quality Label Facebook page ('Quality Label for Youth Centres'), and also to send calls to find new partners via the Secretariat (Péter Zelenka) to be put out to a wider audience.

Diversity in youth centres (1) – Anca-Ruxandra PANDEA

This was the first of two sessions on Diversity, the first more theoretical, with information on what the Council of Europe is doing, and the second a more practical session, relevant specifically to participants' own youth centres.

Anca-Ruxandra PANDEA began by brainstorming with participants their thoughts on Diversity. She continued by focusing on what 'diversity' means within European Youth Centres, explaining that diversity and Intercultural learning are core values, and are embedded in the work of the Council of Europe and its 47 member states.

The criteria for centres receiving the Quality Label of the Council of Europe include the following:

- The centres offer a tolerant and safe working environment respectful of diversity and human dignity (criterion 6)
- The centres provide minimum infrastructure suited to international activities with diverse groups of participants (criterion 9)
- The centres promote the Council of Europe's values (criterion 12)
- The centres promote the Council of Europe's programmes (criterion 13).

Diversity is a reality (fact) of the societies we live in and the mission of the centres is to value it, to promote it and to equip young people with competences to contribute to a culture of human rights which forms the basis of an inclusive society. The Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue defines pluralism, tolerance, broad-mindedness and intercultural dialogue,

along with the respect of human rights as essential preconditions for embracing cultural diversity. The White Paper highlights that not engaging in dialogue presents the risk of stereotypical perception of the other, which leads to building a climate of mutual suspicion, tension and anxiety, the use of minorities and migrants as scapegoats and generally fosters intolerance and discrimination, as well as providing a climate conducive to the rise of extremism and terrorism.

Intercultural dialogue is understood as an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect¹.

The Quality Label criteria are modeled on the European youth centres of the Council of Europe and their work. The presentation focused on the three levels (policy, structures and educational activities) where centres can work further, and used examples from the work of European Youth Centres.

At a policy level, the centres have to stay up-to date with the latest policy developments in human rights and intercultural dialogue fields. The centres, whether involved in local or international work, should seek to promote and support diversity in all their programmes. This can start with involving a diversity of organisations in the programming and decision making regarding the centre, with a particular attention given to minority youth organisations (gender, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious).

Equally, in the current context, it is important for the centres to be able to pick up topics that are “hot”, such as migration and terrorism, and to discuss them with young people from a human rights and intercultural perspective.

In terms of **structural** issues, Ruxa clarified that diversity is key to ensuring buildings are accessible, and language facilities are available for translation. In this respect, the participants at the Platform Meeting had already been introduced in 2015 to the standards on accessibility of the youth centres. Ruxa also highlighted the importance that any centre needs also to be a safe and secure space, in terms of visitors being able to affirm and explore their identity, and this also needs to be part of the promotion of the centres.

At the level of educational activities, standards have been developed both in terms of ways activities are organised and how intercultural dialogue is integrated transversally, as well as how specific work is done to develop young people’s intercultural competence.

In respect to quality standards for intercultural educational activities, two references were given:

- The Quality standards and criteria for educational activities held in the European Youth Centres (available here: www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Training/Study_sessions/2007_Quality_standards_educ_training_en.pdf)
- Guidelines for intercultural dialogue in non-formal learning (available here: <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/8492613/ICD2014.pdf/73add476-4e8e-4522-8fb5-67df5e4ccfc8>)

The input was also used as an occasion to draw attention to recent and upcoming work of the Youth Department on the following themes:

- The Roma Youth Action Plan will continue for the period 2016-2020 and will focus on capacity building of Roma youth and double mainstreaming of Roma youth issues in youth and Roma focused policies. Recent developments include the publishing of *Mirrors – Manual on combating antigypsyism through human rights education*. More information can be found here: www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma

¹ White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue ‘Living Together as Equals in Dignity’, Council of Europe, 2008, p. 9. www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/whitepaper_interculturaldialogue_2_EN.asp

- The work with young people in transforming conflict through building dialogue and reconciliation continues through the Youth Peace Camp this year. More information is available here: www.coe.int/en/web/youth-peace-dialogue
- Migration and the human rights situation of refugees and asylum seekers are reflected in the work undertaken by many youth organisations through study sessions in 2016 and in the further co-operation with the UNHCR on the rights of unaccompanied minors. Equally, the Youth Department contributes its co-operation with the Arab states.
- The No Hate Speech Movement campaign has now been extended to 2017 and remains a flagship project of the Department where all partners' involvement is expected. More information is available here: www.nohatespeechmovement.org.

Examples of good practice from the participating centres

In this session, there were four presentations from participating representatives: Romania, Georgia, Bulgaria and Portugal. By and large, topics were chosen based on issues which have particularly impressed the Expert Team on visits.

Young people involved in the management of a centre – Mihai Adrian VILCEA, Timis County Youth Foundation, Timișoara

This youth centre is co-ordinated by a youth foundation which acts as an umbrella for an NGO in the Timis region. It was established in 1990, but there have been a number of inherent problems in setting up the running of activities for youth, relating both to the building itself as well as finances. As the Timis County Youth Foundation is a private entity, it does not receive grants directly from public funds. However, according to national law, a youth NGO must ensure that 75% of its activities are for youth. What makes the centre unique is that it is run entirely by youth (where, in Romania, 'young' is up to 35 years old), ensuring "youth for youth". Staff are elected, and manage the entire operation, which includes a gym, a pub, accommodation, exhibition halls, seminar rooms, and so on.

Activities include a range of training course and youth exchanges, and the size of the centre also means it can offer space to outsiders for meetings, concerts, and exhibitions. There are usually two or three activities each day, and up to seven can be run simultaneously. Over a period of six months, up to 8,500 individuals visit the centre.

Initially, the main income came from renting out space, which continues to be invaluable; however, now income is mostly generated from the internal programmes, demonstrating how much project activity has increased.

In response, Sergio BELFOR highlighted the key factor of youth running the centre, suggesting that as change is inevitable (when older staff leave), it is worth exploiting new ideas and personnel coming in; he also suggested other centres consider seriously how they can involve more young people in the running of their centres.

Working with stakeholders in founding a youth centre – Gubaz KOBERIDZE, Tbilisi European Youth Centre (TEYC)

The Tbilisi European Youth Centre is still in the process of being built, but Gubaz KOBERIDZE presented steps in how they proceeded.

He began by sharing the good news that his centre now has local and national stakeholders involved, with finances from the City Hall. However, while the situation may seem good now, it

took a long time to reach this point. He explained that initially there was no support, and minimal hope, although they were determined to have a youth centre. It is now an NGO, although funded by the municipality, because it was felt that it was too risky to be reliant on the government.

The idea was born in 2012, and in 2013 it started in Kutaisi, over 200km from Tbilisi. Although there was minimal investment or hope for the first two years, positive negotiations recently began with the mayor of Tbilisi, and he has now agreed to fund the building of a youth centre, based largely on the criteria set out in the Council of Europe's Quality Label brochure. Costs have been estimated at EUR 2 million, although much discussion took place on what facilities would be included in the youth centre building.

This step was followed by a competitive architectural project, and then meetings in both Budapest and Strasbourg. The aim is now to start building in 2016, although all subsequent funding for activities has to be sought from elsewhere. A key event in the future is the possibility of Tbilisi being the European Youth Capital in 2020, but this has not provoked interest from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Key project areas the Tbilisi youth centre hopes to work on include co-operation with the young people in Abkhazia, providing a place for young Armenian and Azeris to meet, as well as offering different services to young people from different countries. Defining future projects is currently a key challenge.

It was mentioned that the building of this youth centre is a good example of showing how important it is to concentrate on the political dimension of the building and workings of youth centre.

Integrating a local Roma community – Vasil IVANOV VASILEV, Youth Centre Plovdiv

Vasil IVANOV VASILEV presented how Youth Centre Plovdiv has managed to integrate the local Roma community. He began by explaining that there are four youth centres in Bulgaria, and set the context of his own in Plovdiv.

Plovdiv is the second largest city in Bulgaria, with four Roma neighbourhoods. While all of them are Roma, they identify differently. In some neighbourhoods they identify entirely as Turkish, speaking Turkish amongst each other, and watching Turkish TV; they are also Muslim. In others, there is a mix in terms of how inhabitants identify themselves, as either Turkish or Roma; in cases of Roma, they are usually Christian. It is clear that many of them are already up against cultural difficulties in the environments in which they live.

The Plovdiv Youth Centre has borne in mind a number of key factors:

- There are two Roma mediators, vital for ensuring good community contact
- Plovdiv partners with local stakeholders, for example, local Roma NGOs; they have also worked with local trainers who have suggested different and more viable approaches.
- Centre staff have taken part in both international and local training courses (e.g. Roma Youth, Mirrors, Compass, etc.), where there have been sessions on working with Roma.

Based on training, a range of methodologies have been employed: firstly, needs were assessed through focus groups, interviews and questionnaires. This fieldwork promoted improved familiarisation on both sides towards getting to know the communities better, building bridges, identifying current problematic issues and learning from experience.

Based on identified needs, the centre has run a number of non-formal educational activities (e.g. based on *Compass*). Learning has also taken place through sport.

The centre still faces a number of challenges: a lack of motivation and language barriers; a feeling of isolation in these neighbourhoods from the local Turkish community; low levels of literacy; cultural misconceptions from both sides (Roma and non-Roma); mostly only males participating; financial difficulties; a lack of trust. These issues are being addressed by firstly 'deconstructing' what was wrongly constructed, and then starting the re-structuring, a process which can take at least six months.

In response to questions, Vasil further explained that there are ways to overcome hostilities, as long as those involved can see results on the way, which, to date, has been one of the centre's main successes.

It was suggested that other centres which work near a Roma community could partner with the Plovdiv centre on a joint project.

Erasmus+ / strategic partnerships – Fernanda Maria OLIVEIRA BRITO, IPDJ Lisbon Youth Centre

Fernanda Maria OLIVEIRA BRITO, from the hosting centre, presented how the Lisbon Youth centre works and runs strategic partnership activities.

She first clarified that the Lisbon Youth centre is one of 18 youth information centres in Portugal working under the responsibility of the IPDJ, the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth. Areas of work include entrepreneurship, non-formal education, sports, youth mobility, and volunteering.

Fernanda highlighted that, although the Lisbon Youth Centre is able to work in partnership with other youth associations, because the centre is a public government institution it is not eligible to apply directly for grants from the European Youth Foundation, Erasmus+ or Youth in Action. When the centre works with partners from other countries, then there are possibilities to apply for funds. Nevertheless, Erasmus+ activities do take place in the Lisbon youth centre, where accommodation is available for participants.

Activities which the centre does promote include Action KA1 (Learning mobility of individuals) – mobility project for young people and youth works, KA3 (Support for policy reform), and SALTO activities, with the exchange of good practices through non-formal educational training,

Other activities which young people can take part in include activities within the framework of ERYICA (training courses, seminars and summer universities), EURODESK, as well as local information point programmes.

Partnership activities are set up according to a partnership agreement. Meeting the criteria ensures that a potential activity fits within the centre's overall aims and objectives, including, for example, that associated financial and structural issues have been taken into consideration. Co-operation with other centres for such strategic partnerships takes place both nationally and internationally, employing NFE methods, and through leisure activities and voluntary work. At the international level, current international strategic partnerships exist between youth centres in Bulgaria, Italy, Serbia, Spain and the Czech Republic: this has involved working on joint projects, as well as exchange visits. At a more local level, partners have included Movijovem (youth mobility), the National Youth Council, AID Global, the Portuguese Network of Young People for Gender Equality, and Sonha, Faz e Acontece, a project on education for young people in São Tome and Principe, off the western coast of Central Africa.

Presentation of the Centro de Juventude de Lisboa, Portugal – Fernanda Maria OLIVEIRA BRITO

Two short videos introduced the centre and its most recent achievement, the award ceremony for achieving the Quality Label.

All participants were given the gift of a pendrive, on which was already uploaded information and a short video about one of the centre's projects, *colorADD*, a system for identifying colours for those who are colour blind.

The session continued with a short tour of the centre, and an explanation of the facilities. Over and above meeting rooms and administration offices, of particular note were the following:

- There is a theatre, where Platform Meeting participants were able to attend a dance event on the first evening.
- The centre houses other organisations and programme offices, including Erasmus+ and the National Agency of Youth Centres office (the headquarters are in Braga); Aidglobal (www.aidglobal.org) – an organisation which has worked with 250 teachers and around 300 youngsters on global initiatives: one outstanding project includes providing books to schools in Mozambique for libraries, and training local staff in promoting reading and associated projects in Portuguese.
- The centre also includes a Health Unit (Gabinete de Saúde Juvenil).
- The Information Point, for young people and adults, serves as a physical as well as virtual library with Internet access.
- The centre is able to accommodate almost 100 people, in both dormitory and double-room accommodation (with kitchen and leisure area).
- There is a canteen serving three meals a day.

Diversity in youth centres (2) – Anca-Ruxandra PANDEA

Day 2 began with a continuation on the topic of Diversity from Day 1. Anca-Ruxandra PANDEA provided first a brief reminder of what the Council of Europe considers 'intercultural competence' to be, highlighting that it is something all young people should have and develop, and that it should be taken into every kind of work youth centres are involved in. Key indicators included the following:

- empathy
- an awareness of one's own identity and the ability to be explicit about it; an awareness of one's own biases
- the capacity to judge appropriately, as a need to respect the human dignity of the other
- the ability to communicate efficiently and clearly with others in different settings
- conflict transformation, between countries, and between people: the ability of young people to be able approach this
- tolerance of ambiguity: the capacity to understand, so that others might come to certain conclusions due to their own beliefs (e.g. cultural or religious origins) and to accept this. (e.g. "I might not be able to understand, but I can and have to accept this and treat it as valid, and engage with them.")

The second session focused on the self-assessment of the work done on the three levels (policy, education activities, structures). Participants were asked to complete a **questionnaire** to self-evaluate their youth centres.

Issues covered included the following:

- keeping up-to-date with the latest policy discussions on intercultural learning (ICL) and communication (ICC), and diversity
- involving and supporting youth, and minority youth, in programme development
- addressing diverse needs of target groups (including gender, religion, etc.), and reflecting diversity within local community

- providing space for participants to explore their identity
- ensuring staff awareness of diversity and ICL issues, principles and values
- addressing issues within a human rights approach.

Participants were given the chance to grade their own centres on a scale of 1-5, and add comments. Overall, it would seem that centres are certainly addressing many of these issues to some extent, but many also have several further steps to take for improvement; some of the issues cannot be resolved overnight, but are part of ongoing plans and activities.

Participants were then asked to look at the following **discussion** questions:

1. What are the needs of young people? (in terms of intercultural learning, discrimination, racism, etc.)
2. Where are we? (i.e. what is our position as a youth centre in terms of these issues)
3. What limitations do we have?

Participants then discussed their findings in country(-related) groups, chose one area to work on, and identified three steps towards reaching that aim.

Most groups found the session useful in identifying similarities as well as differences between centres; some also began negotiations for co-operating on projects; other centres found their work was less similar to that of other centres. Some centres do not yet develop educational programmes with marginalised or diverse groups in mind; in other centres, this sort of diversity work is automatic, being based on the local context which is already diverse.

The following lists some of the ideas groups came up with, and how they would begin to address them:

Turkey (Rabia VEZNE)

Problem: Lack of continuity and sustainability in the participation and interest of young people:

- Carry out needs assessment, and base training on emerging needs
- Use non-formal education training methods
- Include multi-cultural diversity issues in the training (including training trainers).

Ireland (Tim O'DONOGHUE)

Address needs of young people from migrant families placed in Ireland:

- Be aware of barriers, for example, language, cultural, local community views, access to social and recreational opportunities
- Establish contact and provide English language support; explore needs (see above) and develop a joint plan to address them; set targets and timeframes; provide education in human rights, and work with centre staff on ways of integrating new community members; host open intercultural events and involve local stakeholders
- Reflect on and evaluate process and progress; ensure young people lead on this; acknowledge progress but also challenges.

Finland, Villa Elba (Heli LEHTO)

Overall Diversity training:

- Raise awareness of, and educate all staff working at the centre in Diversity
- Run two two-hour training courses in March for technical staff on what Youth Centre pedagogy is
- Promote human rights education in 2016 with support from the Council of Europe.

Finland, Metsäkartano (Jari KORKALAINEN)

Policy level implications: involving youth organisations and young people in the development of programmes

- Map the relevant organisations and individuals willing to continuously participate in developing programmes
- Create a platform and associated methods for voluntary development team to work together with centre staff

- Bring new programme seeds alive and implement them at the centre in everyday work.

Estonia (Kaur KÖTSI)

Policy level implication:

- Be aware that all youngsters are diverse
- Involve youngsters in developing conditions for them, through youth work programmes, and in youth policy in general
- Work with diversity across sectors.

Luxembourg, Marienthal (Sandra BRITZ)

Involving young refugees from the nearby refugee home:

- Recruit one or more volunteers to help frame and organise activities with young refugees
- Get in touch with the organisation responsible for the management of the home in order to check on needs and possibilities
- Set up a joint activity, evaluate and develop it further.

Bulgaria, Stara Zagora Youth Centre (Mircho HRISTOV)

Policy dimension: working with sensitive topics that emerge and reflecting this in programming / activities:

- Identify young people who are concerned with sensitive topics (gender, religious, ethnic, etc.)
- Plan activities with the youngsters and youth workers: collect their proposals and include them in the work of the centre
- Empower youth to implement the programmes they have developed themselves.

Bulgaria, Plovdiv Youth Centre (Vasil IVANOV VASILEV)

Centre structures and staff: encourage feedback and specific suggestions on how to improve centre accessibility:

- Develop working tools for regular feedback at all levels (e.g. suggestion / feedback box)
- Include systematic supervision with staff, as well as peer feedback exchanges amongst staff
- Invite various organisations to give suggestions on how accessibility can be improved.

Germany, Jugendbildungsstätte Unterfranken (Anastazja Zydor)

To include more groups with fewer opportunities in our activities:

We have some contact for youngsters with fewer opportunities, for example with migrational backgrounds or young refugees. We organise some activities and involve them in youth exchanges (e.g. in 2015 and 2016, there will be six exchanges with Poland). Some schools support youth exchange participation, but cannot pay for the activities.

- Familiarise ourselves with other funding programmes (not only Erasmus+ or Deutsch Polnisches Jugendwerk) at the local level (e.g. Flüchtlinge werden Freund in Bavaria)
- Make a template for co-operation with schools or youth associations (contract, division of task and responsibilities)
- Make a template letter to inform parents about youth activities, to clarify fears and doubts, and to inform them about security and financial standards.

Separate working groups (Discussions on issues specific to particular youth centres in relation to the Quality Label)

For this working session, participants were divided into three groups, as follows: already (or almost) labelled centres; representatives who participate regularly in the Platform Meetings, but are not yet labelled; centres new to the Quality Label project.

Group 1: Labelled centres (moderators: Georges METZ, Péter ZELENKA)

This group comprised the following centre representatives: Destelheide, Belgium; Villa Elba, Finland; IPDJ Lisbon, Portugal; Sremci Karlovci, Serbia; Brežice, Slovenia CEULAJ-Mollina (Malaga), Spain; Akdeniz University Euromed Youth Centre, Turkey.

Before discussions began, this group was shown lists of advantages and recommendations, of each labelled centre, those which had been highlighted initially by the Expert Team. This enabled participants in this group to engage in a focused discussion on how relevant the recommendations had been, and how centres had responded to these since being awarded the Quality Label.

Taken from the reports on centre visits, there was a range of individual centre **advantages** across the six labelled centres. These included, for example, a variety and range of services offered; networking opportunities; pioneering role in youth work, and so on. Some overlapping features included: geographical location; positive attitudes of staff (and volunteers) towards youth; support of local and/or public authorities; a future potential of youth work.

All centres are given **recommendations** by the Expert Team. Some of these are similar in each case, such as to develop a mission statement, develop a local presence and international relationships, to improve 'visibility' (in its widest sense) or to improve accessibility. Others are more specific to each centre, for example, to secure a budget; renovate the centre; provide staff training. Overall, labelled centre representatives felt that the recommendations had been very helpful: they show how others see their work, providing an objective view. They also helped centres to think over their strategy, and push towards promoting recognition of their youth centre at a local and national level. It was mentioned, however, that at times more clarity would have been helpful.

In terms of how these youth centre representatives see the benefits of the Platform Meetings in the future, it was suggested that more parallel sessions, focusing on issues specific to just a few centres, would enable participants to discuss topics in more depth. With 40 participants (as at this Platform Meeting), it was felt that plenary sessions were too big for effective discussion. Other suggestions included having a common thread or topic to work on each year within the network, sharing examples of good practice online, as well as having a generic introductory publication about the Quality Label which centres could use locally, and perhaps adapt, in order to promote visibility.

Georges METZ added that there had been a consensus that the Platform be enlarged, but that the criteria should be maintained. Centre representatives were welcome, and in fact encouraged to contribute to the Platform Meetings in terms of content, and it was suggested the Expert Team take this up, with a view to exploiting the knowledge and experience, in particular, of labelled centres.

Group 2: Regular attendees, not yet labelled (moderators: Anca-Ruxandra PANDEA, Sergio BELFOR)

This group comprised the following centre representatives: Plovdiv and Stara Zagora, both Bulgaria; Estonia; KDYS, Ireland; Naujoji Vilnius, Lithuania; SNJ, Luxembourg; GNRation, Braga, Portugal; ENYC.

These centres were described perhaps best as the most critical group: they often attend Platform Meetings, but are not necessarily asking to be labelled.

They described themselves as the "no" group because they may have no accommodation, or no educational staff, or no co-management (with young people), or no political commitment.

However, they can also be called the “yes” group because they fulfill most of the criteria: no, they don’t have accommodation, but, yes, they could make an arrangement with “the hostel next door”; no, they don’t have educational staff, but yes, they are willing to bring in more training and support; no, because young people are not part of the decision-making processes, but yes, because they are willing to see how this could work in different centres (which, as Ruxa suggested, could well become a useful topic for the next training course); yes, because perhaps member states could be made more aware about the Quality Label project, as in some countries there is a lack of understanding of youth centres.

The commitment of this group was very strongly felt. Carlo Manuel DE SOUSA SANTOS reaffirmed that it would be wrong not to maintain or fall short on the Quality Label criteria, and that “a top youth centre needs top criteria”. Participants from this group come to this meeting because they are committed to the label, and it helps identify who they are as a youth centre; without this extra feature, some centres feel they would not receive the funding they do. Some centres refer to the Quality Label criteria, and try to implement them in their own centres, despite not necessarily applying for the award themselves, stating that the Quality Label “is an important pillar in youth work” (Kaur KÖTSI, Estonia).

However, this group also suggested that they would welcome more from labelled centres sharing what it means to have the Quality Label award, its benefits and how it is used.

It was pointed out that having government representatives at the Platform Meetings was very important in disseminating information, in making discussions more vibrant and realistic, and allowing disagreements to surface; this helps individuals when they return home to be prepared for local networking and collaborating. There was thus a strong proposal to continue involving government representatives.

Group 3: Centres new to the label project (moderators: Olaf KÖNDGEN: Djuro BLANUŠA)

This group comprised 14 participants new to the Platform Meeting from nine countries. All participants were already familiar with the Quality Label brochure and associated criteria. There was a brief introduction to the Council of Europe, and the role of the youth department, and how the youth centres in Budapest and Strasbourg function.

Participants in this group stated that the Quality Label added prestige, visibility and benefits in terms of quality development, training courses and networking. Some of the centres are already members of ENYC or local equivalents, although each network operates in a different way.

To date, no country has more than one labelled centre; thus the question arose as to whether this might change. Participants were also interested to know if there was any flexibility in the criteria, and how they could take into consideration criteria which were deemed difficult, if not impossible to organise (e.g. accommodation, an issue for many in this group).

Given that this group, as well as the previous group, comprised participants who do not necessarily aspire to the Quality Label award itself, yet nevertheless benefit significantly from the Platform Meetings and associated documentation, or are otherwise not yet eligible, a number of suggestions were made:

- the Quality Label criteria could be used for establishing suitable conditions at the national level (e.g. as in Estonia)
- linking up with other networks should be explored
- the Council of Europe could provide support for youth centres, acting as a bridge between local and national levels

- the Council of Europe could provide a support letter of recommendation (in cases where a member of the Expert Team is familiar with the centre in question) for applying for funding, construction, and so on.

Reflecting on work in youth centres, considering the example of Lisbon Youth Centre – giving feedback to our hosts

This session was carried out in groups. Participants were asked to highlight specifically strong, and/or unique points of the Lisbon centre, as well as make suggestions for improvements and ideas to implement. A summary of ideas follows:

Strong points

It was strongly agreed that Lisbon Youth Centre staff are friendly, the location – near the airport, but accessible to the city centre – is, for most purposes, good. In general, it was felt that the space, and use of it, was highly appropriate, and also made accessible for those with special needs. The range of rooms for use during the meeting was suitably varied, and also appropriate for non-formal education purposes, with wifi connection useful (despite a skype-call hitch). The auditorium and translation booths were also mentioned.

The centre seems to have good links with outside organisations, and some financial stability with the government, although this is obviously never secure. The inclusion of such programmes in the centre as Aid Global www.aidglobal.org was considered mutually beneficial. Council of Europe visibility (posters, brochures) seemed good, and participants commented on the extra posters for colorADD www.coloradd.net.

Participants also mentioned the quality, variety and price of food in the restaurant, although were disappointed catering staff did not speak English.

Suggestions

Several participants asked about youth participation in terms of activities, and involvement in the running of the Lisbon Youth Centre: neither was evident during the Platform Meeting visit. It was suggested that posters and/or a list of activities run by the Youth Centre, or brought in by other organisations would be extremely beneficial. Participants were also interested to know whether young people come to the centre individually, or in groups, and what they do. It was also suggested that it would be appropriate if volunteers spoke English / other languages, also to encourage other support staff to develop their own language skills. Although some centre staff struggle with English, it was noted that the inclusion of room names in English was much appreciated.

Suggestions were made for more data in general to be made publicly available or visible. (This included a sign to notify visitors that CCTV cameras are in operation.)

Some youth centre representatives mentioned that they were disappointed not to be able to carry out joint projects with the Lisbon centre, due to the Erasmus+ status.

In response to feedback, the Lisbon centre stated that they were still working on many aspects of the Youth Centre, and in particular to improve its visibility, and that of its activities and young people.

Concepts and mission statements – Georges METZ

Georges METZ divided his talk into two parts: firstly, the importance of concepts and mission statements, and secondly, how his centre in Luxembourg incorporate these. This session was in direct response to issues which came up at the 6th Platform Meeting in Sremski Karlovci, Serbia, as well as at the Lisbon Platform Meeting.

a) Why we think that the above are important

Georges clarified that, basically, although they differentiate between them, both concepts and mission statements are the same: a description of what is being done at the centre “on paper”. His talk focused on the necessity and value of having mission statements written clearly, and he enumerated four important reasons:

1. For the recognition of youth work: there are currently discussions taking place within the Council of Europe about youth work recognition. This follows two youth-work conventions which took place in Belgium, and the Declaration of the 2nd Youth Work Convention (April 2015) has now been taken on board by the youth steering committee, towards a recommendation with youth work being considered a major contribution to young people and social inclusion. It is important, however, to know *what* needs recognising: with this in mind, we need to know what youth work and youth centres deliver, and what their added value is. It is considerably easier to promote this if it is in a written format as a mission statement.

As an example, Georges mentioned a law that had just been passed in Luxembourg on quality youth work. This implies government investment, but also needs assurance that the tools are in place to make it happen (e.g. the buildings, facilities, educational resources, etc.). In Luxembourg, seven areas have been defined where non-formal education adds value to formal education. These include: the arts; language and communication; physical exercise; participation and democracy; social relations; science and technology; transitions to autonomy. Thus it is crucial, with a youth centres, to be able to describe clearly exactly what we do.

2. The Expert Team regularly recommend that individual centres develop a mission statement to sharpen their profile. Georges included examples from the six centres already labelled, highlighting that it is not descriptive, but a case of being aware of what the centre is doing. This had arisen because the Expert Team found it was not always clear what centres were delivering.

It is important to be able to see the centre’s priorities and focuses, and its added value; this also helps promote visibility, both to the general public, as well as to potential partners. It is important that activities are expressed in terms of goals, for clarification to outsiders. Potential partners are also better able to see how co-operation can occur, and how their own goals can be achieved too, and of course a clear mission statement gives the centre direction, and a route for development too.

3. Quality assurance refers to quality in terms of both structural and educational quality. This means addressing both infrastructure – finances, and staff, as well as the activities – their methodology and the interaction between staff and participants.

Structural quality can itself be further divided into the structure itself (the buildings and staff, etc.), as well as the process quality, which relates to the extent to which conditions are appropriate for youth work, and does not measure the outcomes of an activity. In this way, quality is ensured by the fact that people are aware of the objectives, the concepts and missions, and how to reach them. Those involved in youth work must also be aware of the missions, and work towards them. Thus working on concepts help work towards a quality approach.

4. Sustainability

Accountability is increasingly required to demonstrate your work is effective. This is much easier if you are able to describe what you’re doing!

In this way, Georges clarified why concepts and mission statements are insisted on in the Quality Label criteria.

By way of example, Georges then focused on how the concepts and mission statements are dealt with at his centre, Marienthal, Luxembourg, which is part of national youth, the SNJ. The centre fulfills the five requirements of the SNJ, as follows:

- a dedicated premises for young people
- a specialist centre, with a team
- pedagogical laboratories (where staff can look for and try out new methods and activities)
- a skills' and resource centre (whereby others can learn from the centre, as training is offered)
- partners in regional, national and/or European networks.

All three centres in Luxembourg have a common approach in terms of tasks, how they approach young people, and which groups are targeted. They also have shared values and quality standards.

Each centre has a its own concept paper describing the missions of a centre, although these are very much in line with the SNJ's overall missions. For example, features of non-formal education used by the SNJ centres include learning by doing, process-orientated learning, participation, and so on.

In the Marienthal centre concept paper, the following are included:

- how the centre fits within the SNJ
- what non-formal education is
- what the characteristics of NFE are
- what special programmes and activities they have
- what training courses and publications they have
- pedagogy.

With further examples, Georges highlighted that having a concept helps act as a set of guidelines for staff, and helps them stay focused, as well as develop their activities. It clarifies to others what the centre does, and makes it easier to be clear about what a centre can, and cannot deliver. With youth policies, and funds coming from outside organisations, this is of paramount importance.

Tim O'DONOGHUE (Ireland, KDYS Youth Organisation) gave an example whereby outside funding, from an organisation with a different perspective, dictated not only how activities were described, but also that staff to be called "youth justice workers". Even if this happens, it is important that a centre stays focused on its own missions and approach; having clearly written and visible concepts and missions will significantly help this.

Space and time for future bilateral or multilateral co-operation projects – Sergio BELFOR

This open session enabled youth centre representatives to state what areas of work they were interested in promoting, and finding other centres for collaboration. Sergio encouraged participants to have a clear focus, and establish the first steps towards a joint project.

While discussions continued after the session too, many projects are still very much in the early stages. The example below demonstrates the type of collaborations under discussion:

Youth Cultural Center Brežice, Slovenia (Nataša KALIN)

What are the needs?

A bigger role in decision-making processes at a local level; youth policy making

Where are we?

Motivating the local municipality to become a "Youth Friendly Municipality". The certificate as a Youth Friendly Municipality is an award to those local authorities that have in recent years successfully implemented measures in the field of local youth policy and thus assured young

people space in which they can develop their competences and skills, achieve autonomy and quickly blossom into adulthood.

The municipality has to fulfil all eight of the required criteria, which are: dealing with young people systematically, youth participation, youth organisation, youth information, youth employment, youth education, accommodation policies and youth mobility.

As a result, we will encourage the municipality and local youth to fulfil all these criteria.

Limitations: Fulfil all criteria – especially in the area of youth employment (the biggest challenge).

Future partnerships:

- On youth participation with Romania and Turkey (Kocaeli International Youth centre)
- Study visits (Croatia to Slovenia)
- Collaboration with Croatia (joint project on human rights using comic / cartoon methods and tools)
- Project in process (to be approved) – with Serbia and other European partners
- Project with Destelheide (to be approved).

Future development of the Quality Label project – Olaf KÖNDGEN

Participants were asked to give their suggestions on the Quality Label project and Platform Meeting under a series of headings. The following lists include a brief selection of information noted down, with minimal editing. Some ideas have been suggested at previous platform meetings, while others are in the pipeline, or ongoing.

1. Platform meeting

- organise thematic groups
- split into small groups to go into more detail on topics
- extend the meeting to five days
- cover travel costs
- include a session about existing networks (e.g. ENYC)
- include (more) free time to promote sharing of experiences with other youth centres.

2. Training course

Topics: HRE (and in more depth); diversity in youth centres; working with refugees at the local and international level; how to break stereotypes about minority and other sensitive youth groups; impact-measurement tools

- involve young people in the Youth Centre training
- provide training for educational staff
- create of a pool of trainers for Quality Label Youth Centres
- run a training course twice a year at different labelled centres
- clarify how to share the training content for multiplying at other centres.

3. Secretariat

- send materials to centres about current campaigns to disseminate information more widely
- develop a presentation about the Quality Label process for centres to use to inform local and national stakeholders
- provide better visibility of the Quality Label project in the youth sector
- update youth centres on a regular (annual?) basis about the Quality Label project (e.g. with an annual letter / report).

4. Network

- set up a mailing list to share communication
- provide closer co-operation with the ENYC (and other networks)
- set up secure log-in for participants on the website to share ideas

- make the Facebook group more active, with the latest news, vacancies, meetings, calls for events, and so on.
- promote study visits / job shadowing of staff between youth centres.

5. Future

- focus on how to co-operate with other networks
- clarify benefits for Quality Label centres when applying to the European Youth Foundation
- set up meetings with youth centres which belong to the public administration (e.g. Portugal, Spain), and how to manage these centres
- promote digital youth work
- look into ways of measuring impact of youth work
- share reports from meetings and youth centres with others.

The Youth Department of the Council of Europe – Antje ROTHEMUND

Antje ROTHEMUND began with a very brief outline of what the Youth Department is, quoting Peter Lauritzen, “what we do, it’s like a youth centre in the middle of a ministry”. She went on to explain that it is the only international organisation which has two residential educational centres with its own staff, which demonstrates the commitment the Youth Department has with working with and for young people directly and not through intermediaries.

She explained how the Council of Europe now comprises 47 member states, yet in the youth field, it is working with 50 countries, offering young people the opportunity to learn about democracy and human rights. After the opening of the second European Youth Centre in Budapest in 1995, other member states asked how such a centre could be set up in their countries. As this was financially not feasible, the Council of Europe looked for other possibilities for associate member states to promote the philosophy and values of the EYCs.

The creation of the European Network of Youth Centres (ENYC) was such an attempt, yet the network brings together a diversity of members, not all of them youth centres or residential youth centres.

The idea of developing quality criteria to allow interested centres in member states to enter into a self-paced quality development process was then drawn up and this was how the Quality Label came into being.

The Quality Label project is now eight years old, and has grown enormously. In 2015, the project was enlarged to include a training course. Besides an online site, there is also a Facebook group where centres can promote activities, yet there is still a need for improved communication amongst centres, as well as between individual centres and the Council of Europe.

Antje mentioned that Olaf KÖNDGEN, till now a key player in the Quality Label project, will be moving to take up a post at the Directorate of Policy Planning within the Council of Europe in Strasbourg . Until the new EYCB Executive Director is nominated, the Quality Label project will be followed by Tina Mulcahy, Executive Director of the EYC Strasbourg, and Péter Zelenka in Budapest and Anca-Ruxandra Pandeia as Educational Advisor. Other people will also be brought in to work on and familiarise themselves with Quality Label project issues, for example, the new director of citizenship and participation, Matthew Johnson; as an experienced diplomat, he will be able to further the project and help promote it more widely.

Antje then continued by **responding to comments** which had arisen from the three groups on the Quality Label project, and Platform Meetings.

She acknowledged the need for both a one-size-fits-all approach, as well as ensuring individual centre **needs** are met. She welcomed the ideas that had been suggested, in particular ways of

promoting the Quality Label professionally using various media (film, documentation, etc.). She explained that she is already in discussion with colleagues on how to help promote centres, and is also looking into using centres for activities funded by the European Youth Foundation; this could be financially advantageous, helping multiply know-how, as well as providing training and other opportunities for local staff. She encouraged youth centre representatives to investigate what national governmental youth departments are doing, in order to consider co-operation on collaborative projects.

In terms of **training**, Antje reaffirmed the importance of addressing the needs of different centres' needs, and confirmed Anca-Ruxandra's participation in devising the programme to best meet those

She also encouraged centres to encourage their own staff to apply to Council of Europe training events in Strasbourg and/or Budapest (as also posted on the Quality Label Facebook page), as another opportunity of multiplying that training to local staff.

Ultimately, other training which can take place in local centres should enable local staff to take part, and help raise the centre's profile.

Political commitment: Antje reminded participants that the Quality Label criteria are created as an invitation to multiply them in youth policy, to promote quality development and benchmarks to member states. Antje mentioned that a Council of Europe Committee of Ministers' draft recommendation on youth work was currently being worked on by the CDEJ, one which will be ultimately help create more and better political commitment from member states. This will in turn help make quality standards more inherent in youth work, demonstrating that youth centres contribute to youth policy implementation. This will be facilitated if centres can be closely linked with local or national authorities.

Antje acknowledged some participants' financial restraints but explained that funds for travel to Platform Meetings were currently not available; she mentioned that funding could, however, be looked into for travel to the Quality Label training course.

Georges METZ responded to Antje ROTHEMUND by mentioning that in some countries, the youth centre is intentionally not run by a public service; this can mean looser links to policies and administrative organisations. Nevertheless, youth centres can contribute to the discussion on inclusion and education of young people, although not represented in the Advisory Council, if the Platform is used to feed the discussion about recognition of youth work. Some centres were particularly keen to be involved in policy discussions at a European level (e.g. Heli LEHTO, Vila Elba, Finland).

The discussion continued by reiterating the plans to enlarge the Expert Team, but also mentioning how discussions can also take place online, which would enable wider contributions. Further improved communication could be affected by the circulation of *Think Youth*, the monthly newsletter, to all youth centres. Other ideas picked up on included the development of a poster in local languages, and/or a PDF version which could be adapted locally and printed.

Labelled youth centre representatives could also represent the Expert Team in other scenarios related to youth-work training or education. Sergio BELFOR and Anca-Ruxandra PANDEA also mentioned specific topics on which youth centre representatives have already been, and/or could be contacted to contribute to discussions and training events; this helps centres share and disseminate their knowledge, and is invaluable to others.

The session finished with Lies JACOB inviting participants to the Destelheide Award Ceremony in May, and offering to host the 8th Platform Meeting in Dworp in 2017.

Evaluations and conclusions, end of meeting

A final round of comments highlighted the warm welcome participants had received from the Lisbon Youth Centre, the networking opportunities that had taken place between centres during

the Platform Meeting, the sharing of ideas, and the focus for developing local centre identity and goals. New centres were encouraged to apply for the Quality Label, and many participants were keen to work on joint projects in collaboration with other centres.

Members of the Expert Team expressed their delight that the Project is welcomed by participants with such enthusiasm, and continues to flourish.

APPENDICES

Programme

7th EUROPEAN PLATFORM of YOUTH CENTRES Lisbon Youth Centre, Portugal 22-25 February 2016

Monday, 22 February 2016

- Arrival, Check-in
- 20:00 Welcome reception, social evening

Tuesday, 23 February 2016

- 09:00 Opening
- 09:15 Presentation of participants and youth centres
- 10:15 Background information and state of affairs:
 - Presentation of the label concept
 - Labelled centres
 - 3rd pillar: training
 - Future of platform
- 10:30 Exchange of information on ongoing bilateral projects initiated after last platform meeting
- 10:45 Coffee break
- 11:15 Diversity in youth centres (1)
- 12:30 Lunch
- 14:00 Examples of good practice from the participating centres:
 - Young people involved in the management of a centre
 - Working with stakeholders in founding a youth centre
 - Integrating a local Roma community
 - Erasmus+ / strategic partnerships
- 16:00 Coffee break
- 16:30 Presentation of the Lisbon Youth Centre
- 18:00 Closing of the working session
- 19:30 Dinner

Wednesday, 24 February 2016

- 09:00 Diversity in youth centres (2)
- 10:30 Coffee break
- 11:00 Separate working groups:
 - Labelled centres

- Regular attendants, not yet labelled
- Centres new in the label project

13:00	Lunch
14:30	Reflecting on work in youth centers, considering the example of Lisbon Youth Centre – giving feedback to our hosts
16:00	Coffee break
16:30	Concepts and mission statements
17:15	Space and time for future bilateral or multilateral cooperation projects
18:00	Aperitif, dinner and party

Thursday, 25 February 2016

09:00	Future development of the Quality Label project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) suggestions for future development b) requests to the secretariat and Youth Department in terms of support c) the European Youth Foundation, possibilities for cooperation
11:00	Evaluations and conclusions, end of meeting
12:00	Lunch

Evaluation

30 participants completed the questionnaire.

To what extent were your expectations from the meeting fulfilled?

87%	
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Comments:

I expected to learn about more practical activities, e.g. information on projects and activities.

The programme was good, but some sessions were too long and I lost my attention.

On Day 1, more sessions based on NFE methods would have been good. (several participants)

More on existing networks would be useful.

What would you consider to be the main outcomes of the Platform Meeting for you personally, your institution, and/or your project?

Overall, the three key areas of benefit from the Platform Meeting were the chance to forge new contacts and to **network**, opportunities for sharing and **collaboration**, and a greater understanding of what the **Quality Label** is, and the process required for acquiring the award.

Other ideas mentioned included gaining ideas, learning about diversity, getting feedback from others, identifying action to be taken on returning home, and having a clearer focus on one's own centre and its development.

How would you evaluate the achievement of each of the aims and objectives set for this Platform meeting? (on a scale of 1 to 5; 1 = not achieved at all; 5 = fully achieved)

Aim: To encourage professional exchange among people responsible for youth centres wishing to associate with Council of Europe youth policy	4.4
Objectives:	4.5
- to present the 'Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres'	
- to deepen participants' knowledge on non-formal education with young people	3.4
- to promote Council of Europe values in youth policy and youth work standards	3.9
- to establish contacts for networking and co-operation amongst participants.	4.6

How would you evaluate the usefulness of the following elements of the programme? (on a scale of 1 to 5; 1 = not useful at all; 5 = extremely useful)

Quality Label – Background information and state of affairs	4.5
Diversity in youth centres	3.8
Examples of good practice from the participating centres	4.3
Separate working groups (labelled centres, regular attendants, new centres)	4.5
Reflecting on work in youth centres, considering the example of Lisbon Youth Centre	3.9
Plenary discussion on future perspectives; preparation of 8 th platform	3.9
Presentations of the youth centres and projects of the participants	4.2
Discovering Lisbon Youth Centre	3.7
General methodology of the meeting	3.9
Information and documents received in the preparation phase	4.6

Comments

Next time, I will bring a young participant to the Platform Meeting.

Is the format of the meeting suitable for you? Please explain your response.

Yes: more than half of the participants agreed that the format was suitable.

Comments included:

- *Perhaps the Platform is growing too big.*

Suggestions included:

- *Include more group work activities based on NFE methods*
- *Organise cultural visits*
- *Include separate sessions for government representatives*
- *Mix representatives from labelled and non-labelled groups*
- *Offer parallel sessions with different topics*
- *Go into more depth in some topics.*

What topics would you suggest for the 8th European Platform of Youth Centres?

A very wide range of topics was included. More than two people suggested the following:

- *international co-operation*
- *more information on what a youth centre is*
- *non-formal education methods.*
- *youth participation and youth work.*

Other topics mentioned were the following:

- *community work*
- *digital youth work*
- *inclusion*
- *mobility*
- *profiling your youth centre*
- *sustainability**
- *the recognition of youth work profession*
- *the relationship between governments and youth centres*
- *the role of youth centres in policy development in the youth field*

(* Some of these topics have been presented / given focus at previous Platform Meetings. Perhaps powerpoint presentation slides could be made available, and/or a reminder of access to previous reports.)

What periods in 2017 would be suitable for you to have another European Platform of Youth Centres?

Many participants included the months of **February to May/June** as suitable with **April and May** as particularly favourable.

Two or three included January, July and August.

What period(s) would NOT be suitable?

- Several stated that the summer is not suitable
- December and January
- one month prior to the Erasmus deadlines
- January to May (one participant)

(NB: Some participants did not distinguish between suitable and not suitable; thus their answers are unclear.)

Do you plan to start the process of acquiring the Council of Europe Quality Label? If yes, what would be your time plan?

YES: 7-10 participants are planning to apply for the Quality Label; two indicated 2016; one for 2017. A handful are still needing to fulfill the criteria.

NO: 3 participants are not considering applying for the Quality Label.

MAYBE: 2-3 participants are dependent on national regulations, and need to investigate further.

Do you plan any follow-up activities to this meeting? If so, please describe the main elements.

Many participants already have a clear idea of what activities they will be carrying out after the Platform Meeting. These include (in order of popularity):

- *partnerships with other youth centres*
- *study visits (to other centres)*
- *transferring information they learned from the Platform Meeting to their own staff (through training)*
- *sharing the report from the Platform Meeting with local staff*
- *staying in touch with colleagues met at the meeting*
- *(re)applying for the Quality Label*
- *addressing the criteria of the Quality Label*

- *contacting ministries to set up meetings.*

**How would you evaluate the following facilities?
(on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is high)**

Accommodation	4.8
Food	4.3
Working rooms and working conditions	4.2
Available technical equipment	4.2
Quality of welcome service	4.4

Comments

One participant commented on the (lack of) **heating** in some rooms at the Youth Centre, and also the variable accessibility of **wifi**.

Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of Lisbon Youth Centre? If yes, please share below:

A handful of participants suggested the better visibility of in-house youth centre activities and that the participation of youth would be recommended.

Any other comments:

The ENYC: greater and more active involvement in the Quality Label process, and Platform Meetings.

Gürkan AKCAER (ENYC) specifically stated that their long-term plan, according to the decision taken in the last General Assembly which was held at the Budapest Youth Centre in January 2016, is for half of the youth centres located in all Council of Europe countries to become members of the network, ENYC.

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