Youth Information Participation
working together
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YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

A MISSION AND A METHOD FOR YOUTH INFORMATION WORK

Work-book based on the processing of the results
of the Working Together conference (Brussels, 2-5 November 2000)

by the Working Together Steering-Group
Brussels, March 2001

WORKING TOGETHER

*Youth Participation: a Mission and
a Method for Youth Information Work*

PREFACE

This is the "Working Together" work-book. The title refers to the objective of the conference of the same name held in November 2000: actively linking together youth participation and youth information, or giving content and form to youth information work together with young people. It deals with the production and the transmission of information and with the overall organisation of the information work.

We call this a work-book because it is designed to allow the reader to work in the area of youth participation. We do not offer pre-prepared recipes, but as stated in the Introduction, we hope that this work-book will inspire action to develop concrete examples of youth participation in one's own situation.

We have worked on the basis of the "Working Together" conference organised on 2 - 5 November 2000 in Brussels. Some 75 youth information workers (practitioners and managers) and 30 young people coming from 20 countries took part in this conference. Subsequently, the processing of the results and report of the conference were discussed with some twenty experts in the field of youth information and youth participation from Benelux countries in Brussels on 15 March 2001. The outcome of this meeting is included in this work-book.

The Statement "Youth Participation as a Mission and a Method for Youth Information Work" (see page 9) was the point of departure for the conference. The focus was put on the presentations of 16 participatory projects in the youth information field from nine European countries, made by the young people themselves. A number of introductory statements and the project workshops served as an introduction to a further series of workshops which completed the conference. The presence of 30 young people turned the conference into a unique, diverse, exciting and, for many, a stimulating experience. The constructive co-operation between the younger participants and the less young ones was very inspiring!

The initiative for the conference, its organisation and the processing of its results were the work of six organisations from the Benelux countries, all of them being members of the European Youth and Information Counselling Agency (ERYICA). These organisations, together with ERYICA, constituted a "Working Together" Steering Group, which was active for two years. Mrs. E. Baars was responsible for preparing the report, for processing the results of the conference and for the framework for increasing expertise (see Part 2). The Working Together Steering Group is very grateful to her!

The Benelux Governments, the Youth Programme of the European Union and the Benelux Secretariat contributed financial and other support which made it possible to organise the conference and to publish this work-book.

The Working Together Steering Group wishes to thank everyone who helped with the conference and this work-book. We hope that that they will make a real contribution to the development of youth participation in youth information work, so that young people can be involved, and stay involved, as much as possible in this work.

Brussels, March 2001.

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CONTENTS

Introduction

[1]

WHY A WORK-BOOK?

This work-book is primarily aimed at youth information workers (practitioners, advisors and managers). At the same time, the work-book can also inspire policy-makers and young people, and managers of organisations can use it to pay attention in a structured way to youth participation in the culture of their organisation. They will need to do some extra work to adapt the content to their reality, and we hope they will.

The work-book should not give the impression that it only deals with youth participation in youth information work. Some countries do not recognise the profession of youth information workers as such. They may have social workers, crisis workers and community workers, dealing in part with youth information. We also invite them to use the essence of this work-book in order to put youth participation into practice.

This document is deliberately a work-book and it needs to be used as a basis and a point of departure for further development. Attention should be paid to the different conditions in each country and for each target-group (especially as regards age). This work-book can be a source of inspiration for that.

[2]

THE CHAPTERS

The Statement (see page 9) was written by the "Working Together" Steering Group in early 2000. It contains an analysis of the link between youth information and youth participation. This statement was the intrinsic basis for the organisation of the conference. That is why it has been included here without any modification.

Youth participation is considered a method of working on the one hand (involving young people in the work) and a mission on the other hand (support and stimulation for the participation of young people). Both options raise questions and need to be discussed. For the conference, in the development of practical hints for actively involving young people in youth information work, we distinguished between the involvement of young people in the production of information and in the delivery of information, and the involvement of young people in the overall organisation of youth information work.

We prepared Part I and II of this work-book on the basis of the Statement, the results of the conference and the outcome of the later expert meeting.

Part 1 **'Youth Information: A New Future'** includes conclusions, recommendations and practical hints in an attempt to give new impulses to youth information work in Europe, at the level of policy and of practice.

Part 2 **'Youth Participation: A New Expertise'** proposes a framework for increasing expertise. This provides practitioners with a basis for determining training objectives and learning periods, for all types of training and courses in youth information work. After all, young people should be actively and increasingly involved in all activities of youth information work, whether it concerns the use of Internet, the organisation of an information service or the way to deliver information.

Part 3 is a chronological report of the Working Together conference, and follows the structure of the conference.

The whole text has been completed with some reactions received from young people participating in the conference, gathered by the Rapporteur by means of interviews on the spot or afterwards by e-mail. The general reactions of the participants were collected by means of the evaluation forms that they filled in. A summary of these is included in Appendix 4.

[3]

THE CONFERENCE IN A NUTSHELL

After the opening session, Mr. Jan Laurens Hazekamp (Manager of the Stichting Alexander in the Netherlands) linked youth participation and youth information, and he included a link to democracy. When young people are actively involved in youth information work, this will lead to an improvement in the quality of the work and to better contact with the target group, among other things. This work-book includes a summary as well as the full text of this presentation (see Appendix 1). This stimulating presentation ended the first day.

The main focus of the conference – on the second day – was the presentation of 16 pilot projects from 9 European countries, presented by the young people themselves. The projects were selected in advance on the basis of the degree of active involvement of young people, in three areas: the production of information, the delivery of information and the overall organisation of youth information work. The presentations revealed that many centres already work with young people, but that it is not easy, nor automatic. The pilot projects were discussed in workshops, and are presented in this work-book.

Professor Koen Raes (University of Ghent) opened the third day with a stimulating theoretical presentation. He gave a brief outline of the questions, themes, standards and values that young people have – both individually and as groups – and how the young people develop into independent citizens. His thesis was supported by research data and he also offered a historical perspective. Finally, he made a link with youth information work by concluding with a list of clear objectives and tasks for youth information work,: now and in the future.

In the afternoon, the participants dealt with youth participation as a part of current practice. This was followed by an discussion of youth information work in 2010 (naturally in the context of the conference topic).

At a concluding plenary session on the fourth day the participants agreed that, Yes, youth participation is a mission of youth information work! How to achieve and realise this objective are open questions to which there is no uniform answer; further initiatives and experiments are still needed.

We also examined the external factors that influence the realisation of youth participation in youth information work. These external factors are related to the questions: "Where is youth information work done?' and 'What forms of co-operation are needed?'

Youth participation as a mission and a method in youth information work, a statement

This is not a conference on youth participation, nor on youth information. It is about the interaction between these two issues, starting from the sociological findings with respect to modern society, more specifically from the implications that this modern society has on the manner in which young people learn and how they deal with information in the learning process.

Youth information work has already been active in this field for years by supporting young people on their way to autonomy in a general approach. After all, we want to provide young people with an overview of the various possibilities and opportunities they have. Youth information work is indeed aware that this information has to be supported by other elements leading to independence. Participation is one of these elements. Various ERYICA partners have already experimented in this field; others are searching for approaches that push out frontiers.

Besides that, we also base ourselves on the know-how with respect to youth participation that is already available. After all, youth participation is not new. Scientists, field workers/experts, previous seminars (ERYICA, 1998, Scotland; Benelux organisations, 1999, Brussels) and really successful participation projects will provide us with a framework to situate the notion of youth participation and all of its aspects. This will enable us to discuss abstractly and concretely about "what youth participation can mean to the youth information work of 2010?"

This ought to be an inspiring conference. Youth information workers have to get new ideas on the meaning that youth participation can have for their work, and of how they can implement it concretely. Existing ideas will be confirmed and will be placed into a larger theoretical framework. Authorities will note that youth information work could be an ideal partner in their attempts to develop more youth participation in society.

This conference should give us a clear view on what youth information should / could do with youth participation in the ten years to come. It will also give concrete indications as to the realisation of this vision.
Therefore, we will explain some aspects of the interface between youth participation and youth information. These aspects can be divided into two groups:
• youth participation as a method: involving young people in youth information work
• youth participation as a mission: supporting young people when they participate in a dialogue with authorities and other social structures.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION AS A METHOD IN YOUTH INFORMATION WORK

A youth information centre can involve young people in all of the aspects of its functioning: gathering information, transmitting it to the target-group, making information material and spreading information.

This approach is refreshing and a challenge, but it is also a break with past practice and is not always easy. This appeared at an ERYICA seminar in Blairgowrie, Scotland (1998) during which several youth information centres compared their practical experience with youth participation. On the basis of this, an inventory has been made of the advantages and obstacles of this approach .

This conference will present various state-of-the-art projects from the Benelux and other countries. These will provide the basis to explain these obstacles and the possible solutions. It will become clear that the involvement of young people in the functioning of youth information centres can have far-reaching positive consequences for the quality of the work, provided that we have the courage to question and change our work.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION AS A MISSION FOR YOUTH INFORMATION

When informing and supporting young people with respect to the possibilities open to them to run their lives themselves, the topic of youth participation is a sine qua non in the current spirit of the time.
Participation of young people (participation in social life and with respect to developments and decision-making) becomes ever more important on all levels and in all sectors of social life. Being involved in what is going on in one's surroundings increases one's knowledge of those surroundings and enables one to give more direction to one's own life. The promotion of the independence of young people is a sine qua non.

We wonder whether youth information work should make commitments in this sense and which is the extent of the responsibility of youth information work. Traditionally, we situate ourselves between the social structures and the young people themselves. After all, we do transmit social information to the youngsters. Should we extend this role to a two-way traffic in which the youth information work has the task to support young people and to inform society about their opinions, views and feelings?

Also in this respect, we will propose a number of successful practical examples from the Benelux and other countries. They will inspire us to question the limits of our work; should the present concept of a youth information centre be adapted to these new tasks, or do they completely fit into the current framework?
Should we perform these tasks ourselves or is it desirable to collaborate with other partners? How about our strong / weak points that support / hamper the fulfilment of these missions? What effect will this new mission have on the training of youth information workers?

Working Together Steering Group

[PART I]

Youth Information:
A New Future

This part includes conclusions, recommendations and practical hints based on the Statement, the results of the conference and the outcome of the later expert meeting.

[1.1]	CONCLUSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE
[1.2]	RECOMMENDATIONS
[1.3]	PRACTICAL HINTS

Youth Information: A New Future

[1.1]

CONCLUSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE

**Youth Participation:
a Mission and a Method for Youth Information Work**

The participants in the conference considered that youth participation is a mission of youth information work. Various European countries find this aspect to be more and more important.

The Statement (see the Introduction) indicates that youth participation as a mission for youth information work is a topic of a political and strategic nature. From the conference it would appear that the existing concept of youth information work needs to be adapted. Besides that, it is clear that it is very important to co-operate with other partners.
The adjustment of the concept should not necessarily lead to a reorganisation of youth information work itself. After all, youth information work has a lot of strong points, and offers a good basis, in many countries, for the active stimulation of youth participation.
In the sense of this mission, youth information work also has its weak points. Having a clear vision concerning youth participation does not necessarily mean that the policy of a youth information centre takes this aspect into account, let alone that youth participation will be applied in practice. A lot of discussion will be needed at the local, national and European levels before youth participation becomes automatic.

The implementation of youth participation depends on the opportunities and possibilities which are experienced, created and used in practice.

Youth participation as a method, meaning the involvement of young people in all aspects of youth information work, is something practical. The active participation of young people in youth information work will provide an important impulse for the participation of young people in society. Involving young people in youth information work sets an example, and supports and stimulates young people to become independent actors in society.

Working with young people in youth information work starts with the relevant knowledge, attitudes and skills.

This implies that youth information workers observe their own actions with young people, discuss them with young people and with colleagues, and change their approach when necessary. Young people need to be assertive in their co-operation with youth information workers and to see them (and youth information work) as a partner in the achievement of the things that they wish to do.

Youth participation as a method is also about the development and learning of skills. If you want to involve young people actively in the production or delivery of information, or if you want to put them partly in charge of the organisation, you have to ask yourself how to go about it?

Youth Participation is Co-operation

Society changes. Youth information work does too. Partly because of globalisation, extreme individualism and the unknown possibilities of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). At the opening of the conference, Nico Meisch (ERYICA) stated that the profession of youth information worker changes in function of the changes in society.

The representative of the Benelux governmental group on Youth, Jos van Rillaer, felt that a youth information worker should co-operate with young people and that young people should be considered as co-operation partners at work.

Jan Laurens Hazekamp's presentation revealed that new methods that were developed by adults generally do not catch on well with young people. If one wants to involve young people actively, one will have to initiate and develop activities together with them. The presentation of the projects also demonstrated this: even the most successful participation projects have trouble keeping the young people active in their project. Koen Raes makes it clear that young people in the today's society cannot be considered as a uniform group. Youth information work should listen to, and act, in accordance with the specific characteristics of different groups. Co-operation with young people has an additional dimension: it contributes to the feeling of belonging, which prevents further individualisation (less involvement with others) and social isolation (feeling excluded).

Youth Participation Starts at the Beginning

On the basis of the results of the conference, it would appear that there is sufficient legitimacy and support to make youth participation a mission and an objective for youth information work.

Research, literature and experience show that involving young people in youth information work should start with the desire of young people to be involved in it, and that the desire to involve young people in this work must lead to a real (rather than token) form of involvement. Only then, initiatives can be started and activities can be developed and undertaken together, leading to a permanent form of optimal participation.

Given that youth participation in youth information work has scarcely started in many places, the exchange of experiences, ideas and methods is of major importance. The implementation and training in co-operation between youth information workers and young people is an additional objective, taking as its point of departure the preservation of the current quality of the existing youth information service.

On the basis of these conclusions, we can make a number of recommendations. These recommendations (see below) are mainly concerned with the stimulation of youth participation as a mission for youth information work. The practical hints (see 1.3 below) deal mainly with the methodical aspects of involving young people in youth information work.

[1.2]

RECREATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

New Mission

- It is important to take a closer look at the legitimacy of "youth participation as a mission". This can be done for instance by means of this work-book and on the basis of additional existing literature.
- It is a positive thing to promote actively the legitimacy of the mission at the local, national and European levels. Consequently, it is important to distribute this work-book as widely as possible and to insert this subject on the agenda of consultations, organisations and authorities.

- It is important for the European network (ERYICA), the national networks and the local youth information facilities to advocate this mission actively in their public relations and publicity work. This might for instance mean that local information centres as well as other partners on all levels, need to adjust their objectives (and image).

New Partners

- Youth information work has to be more oriented towards the informal and formal places frequented by young people, such as educational institutions, social-cultural work and places where they spend their free-time.
- Youth information workers need to be more attentive to, and to join, activities that are organised and initiated by young people (associations, youth councils, etc).
- Each youth information centre and the national networks need to co-operate more, and to maintain contacts, with professional partners that promote youth participation.

New Skills

- Given that it is of major importance to work together and to act together, the expertise of social-cultural youth work should be introduced.
- It is also necessary to adjust the profile of the youth information worker. The capacity to deal and to work with young people has a prominent place in this adjustment.
- It is a priority to train youth information workers to co-operate with and to deal with young people. We need to elaborate a training in "Working Together" in the short term. We can base ourselves on the framework for increasing expertise (see Part 2) and/or on the adaptation of existing training materials of third parties (such as those developed by ERYICA).
- Paying attention to participation, in this case the involvement of young people in all activities of youth information work, should become a permanent part of all types of training and courses in youth information work.

New Impulses

- Exchanging experience, preferably together with young people, is and remains necessary. Local and national conferences on youth participation and youth information can contribute to such an exchange.
- It is necessary to make a project database to keep track of all experiences and to spread them. This can be done on a regional or national level. This would be of even greater value if these records could be available at the European level.
- This work-book contains a number of hints that can be adopted as such because they are so clear and obvious. Some suggestions need to be developed further and to go through an experimental phase before they can be implemented. The stimulation of trial projects, amongst other things by ensuring their funding, can provide new experiences. The national networks and ERYICA should support innovation in this area.
- On the basis of the "Working Together" conference and work-book, the national networks and the European network (ERYICA) should formulate and advocate a clear point of view about youth participation. On the national level, this may eventually lead to youth participation charters, and on the European level, to possible additions to the European Youth Information Charter.
- Last but not least: we can evaluate the state of affairs and give new impulses to youth participation in youth information work by the organisation of a second European Working Together conference (second half of 2003).

[1.3]

PRACTICAL HINTS

The presentations of Jan Laurens Hazekamp and Koen Raes revealed some general and some concrete practical hints:

- Introduce young people as co-operating colleagues.
- Introduce young people as researchers, consultants, policy-makers and/or quality controllers.
- During activities, present short-term objectives to the young people.
- Choose objectives that are relevant to the target-group.
- Use visual material. Many young people are not comfortable with written materials.
- Establish Internet connections wherever possible and give the young people the opportunity to surf, chat and create web-sites.
- Pay attention to the differences between various groups of young people.
- Keep information up-to-date and tailor it to the young people's perception of their environment.
- Present your centre as an independent body that has nothing to do with social welfare or judicial services.

As a result of the presentations of the pilot projects, comparable remarks have been made. Both the youth information workers and young people are enthusiastic about working with peer groups. It seems self-evident, but the participants in the projects stated that when problems occur in the co-operation between young people and youth information workers, it was important to be ready to talk openly about the problems.

On the basis of the reactions concerning the projects and the presentations, we make the following suggestions concerning youth participation activities in youth information work:
- In practice, it is simple to organise interactive short-term activities with young people for the production of information materials.
- Peer education (like the concept of young advisors, see the projects) appears to be an efficient method for the transmission of information.
- Finally, a council of users is a tested and proved concept for the involvement of young people in the organisation of youth information work.

To implement youth participation in practice at all levels, the issue needs to be embedded in policy. One can, for instance, use the checklist below to evaluate practice:

Checklist on Youth Participation

❏ Youth participation is a part of the policy of my organisation, or my organisation supports youth participation projects.
YES / NO

❏ The workers have the necessary skills to communicate with young people.
YES / NO

❏ The young people have the necessary communication skills.
YES / NO

❏ The requirements to maintain the involvement of young people in the project are met (the project is fast, fun and instructive).
YES / NO

❏ The young people are rewarded afterwards
YES / NO

❏ An agreement has been made on the degree of participation, decision-making, the manner of co-operating, job description, support, timetable, etc.
YES / NO

❏ A PR plan has been made to keep the process transparent for young people.
   YES / NO

❏ The co-operation with the external network has been decided and achieved.
   YES / NO

❏ The method chosen is suitable for young people.
   YES / NO

In her doctoral thesis, Marianne Velthuis proposes a management checklist. ('Youth Participation in Youth Information Centres - JIC's. A hype? A must?', M. Velthuis, Rijks Universiteit Leiden, Netherlands). The checklist below can be a tool for the development of a good policy as regards youth participation.

POLICY ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION

❏ included in the policy vision
❏ realistic objectives
❏ allocated means:
   • finances
   • time for execution
❏ young people involved in policy-making in a structural way
❏ training of workers
❏ cyclic policy development
❏ continuation guaranteed
❏ definition of limits
❏ evaluation
❏ vision about project, method and target group

RECRUITMENT AND SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

❏ clarity of tasks
❏ clarity about the expectations of the institution
❏ clarity about what young people can expect from the institution (support, reward)
❏ involvement of young people in recruitment
❏ use of a method suitable for young people
❏ taking the capacities of the individual young person into account
❏ reward (outing, money, certificate)

TASKS OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE

❏ useful
❏ varied, meaning that they have a choice
❏ offering possibilities of development in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills
❏ oriented towards the interests of the young people themselves

As we said before, one has to pay attention to training and courses in co-operation with young people. In the next chapter, we will give an outline of a framework for increasing expertise.

It is clear: youth participation is not a simple or a self-evident mission. Finally, some stimulating expressions coming from the participants in the conference:

• Keep going and do not be discouraged.
• Make co-operation amusing and pleasant (occasionally organise a party for and with the young people involved).
• Take into account the versatility and the spontaneity of the target-group.
• Occasionally accept to change the classic working routines.
• Base your actions on your own expertise, but only show it when it is really necessary.
• See youth participation as an opportunity and a challenge.

[PART II]

Youth Participation: A New Expertise

In this chapter, we provide a basis for practitioners to develop forms of training in youth information work.

[2.1]	INTRODUCTION
[2.2]	A FRAMEWORK FOR INCREASING EXPERTISE
[2.3]	A NUMBER OF CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION
[2.4]	SEVERAL PARTICIPATORY METHODS
[2.5]	GENERAL AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Youth Participation: A New Expertise

[2.1]

INTRODUCTION

The presentations made at the conference give a perspective for increasing expertise. Jan Laurens Hazekamp advocates a more authoritative position for young people, e.g. by having them work as researchers. The roles of consultant, spokesperson, policy-maker and quality controller can be executed perfectly by young people and give them a possibility to work together with adults in a valuable manner.

Koen Raes gives an outline of the position of young people in today's society, marked by individualisation and an individualistic self-image. This makes young people vulnerable in several ways. This aspect needs to be taken into account when dealing with young people.

In his study "Improved social education" (Micha de Winter, 2000), Micha de Winter indicates comparable lines of approach. He uses the term "participation pedagogy" to describe the creation of possibilities for young people to participate in society. Not only by having adults listen to them, but also by exploring critical questions, by confronting different arguments and by searching for new solutions, together with young people. This creates social inclusion and put a stop to the void that young people experience when they are growing up. The harmful effects of an isolated position in society (seeing oneself as the centre of the universe, egocentricity) are then reduced. Relevant third parties, persons with whom young people have a good relationship, confront them with the consequences of their behaviour for their environment and stimulate a sense of social reality. The capacity to express oneself is particularly valuable when it is linked to social sensitivity.

These visions underline the legitimacy of the primary objective of youth information (the stimulation of the autonomy of young people by offering selected and structured information of good quality so that they can make appropriate choices). Youth information work creates the conditions for youth participation by enabling young people to be informed and involved.

In the previous chapter, we stated that the training of youth information workers and young people is a first condition for the maintenance of quality in youth information and for the development of youth participation within this sphere of action. To learn how to deal with young people, to co-operate with them and to involve them in participation projects, one needs to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills. The workshops during the conference, during which young people presented various participation projects, revealed aspects that increase the motivation of young people to be actively involved.

During an earlier seminar in Blairgowrie, Scotland (1998), we already made an inventory of the ways to overcome social and external obstacles to youth participation experienced by youth information workers and young people. The recommendations of the seminar included training in group work, communication, co-operation, reflecting on one's own actions, giving feedback. It was also recommended that training should be amusing, interesting for everyone, for instance by involving young people in the organisation of the training.

[2.2]

A FRAMEWORK
FOR INCREASING EXPERTISE

Based on all these conclusions and recommendations, in other words based on the results of the Working Together conference, the seminar in Scotland and other literature, we have developed a framework for increasing expertise.

To implement youth participation in one's own organisation, one has to go through a whole process. This process is made up of various phases. Each phase has its own specific fields of expertise. All in all, we can divide the areas of expertise into three parts:

A. The identification and creation of the conditions for youth participation

These conditions relate to everything that happens before the first contact with a young person or with a group of young people, and the preparation, together with the young people, of the activity. We have developed this in general terms in section 2.3: "A number of conditions for participation".

B. Methods of youth participation

These conditions concern the implementation of the activity. One then chooses one or more methods according to the type of participation.
We have developed some participation methods in section 2.4: "A number of participation methods.

C. General areas of expertise

Different general skills are needed to conduct activities in the framework of youth participation, i.e. the co-operation with young people. These skills include communication, project-oriented work, publicity, research, evaluation and the transmission of certain concepts.
We have developed some aspects of this in section 2.5: "Some general areas of expertise".

The implementation is made up of four phases, which we will discuss in the sub-paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4:
• phase 1: before making contact
• phase 2: the preparation of the activity
• phase 3: the execution of the activity
• phase 4: the development of the activity.

For each of these phases, one has to define the learning goals. One has to distinguish between the learning objectives for the worker, and those for the young people. The learning objectives are defined on the basis of an analysis of the current situation, bearing in mind the desired development. Be aware of your strong and weak points and do not forget that all learning objectives need to be taken into account. Practice shows that promising participation activities may still fail because of a lack of expertise in other parts of the participation process.

The table below illustrates the whole process, specifying the different phases and learning goals. The text after the table spells out the process and provides some ideas relating to the learning goals. We do not pretend that this is exhaustive. We invite you to use this material to develop modules for increasing expertise.

A. Conditions for participation

		Organisation/worker	Young people
PHASE 1 **BEFORE MAKING** **CONTACT**	**Situation in the organisation** Participation and vision Participation and policy Participation and decision-making **Access and image** Accessibility of the organisation Awareness of the image of the organisation and one's own image	**DETERMINE** **LEARNING** **OBJECTIVES**	
MAKING **CONTACT**	**Initiative for activity** Has an idea, an initiative or an existing activity	**DETERMINE** **LEARNING** **OBJECTIVES**	**DETERMINE** **LEARNING** **OBJECTIVES**
		Organisation/worker and young people together	
PHASE 2 **PREPARATION OF** **THE ACTIVITY**	Nature and status of the activity Objective of the activity Target-group for the activity Analysis of the target-group Tasks and profile of those involved Co-operation agreements Co-operation contracts	**DETERMINE** **LEARNING** **OBJECTIVES**	**DETERMINE** **LEARNING** **OBJECTIVES**

B. Methods of participation

		Organisation/worker and young people together
PHASE 3 **IMPLEMENTATION** **OF THE ACTIVITY**	Forms/methods of participation (council, group of users, panel, debate, research, peer education: young people do prevention work, give information or advice, etc.)	**DETERMINE** **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

C. General areas of expertise

		Organisation/worker and young people together
PHASE 4 **DEVELOPMENT** **OF THE ACTIVITY**	Communication, project-oriented approach, publicity/PR, networking, evaluation, research, etc.	**DETERMINE** **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

[2.3]

A. A NUMBER OF CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION ■

Phase 1 - Before making contact, and making contact

• Situation in the organisation

The workers can analyse their organisation in such a way that they identify the needs for further youth participation in the institution's policy and quality measures, as well as the necessary action to fulfil these needs.

> A youth information worker, Eva, has the task of planning the organisation of Youth Information Centres (YICs) in her region. She wants to do it together with young people. What should a YIC look like, what needs to be inside it, which approach works well, etc. All YICs of the region will look the same so that the project will have a strong impact. Before approaching the young people, she realises that the ideas that the young people contribute may be very different from the ideas of the management. She will leave two months later on maternity leave, and she is afraid that the work will be interrupted because of her absence. In fact, she wants the management to be just as curious about the young people's opinions as she is herself.

IS THERE A POLICY VISION ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE? IF SO, WHAT IS IT?
Is there a policy vision about co-operating with young people?
Is there a vision about quality measures within the organisation? How are young people referred to in it?
What is the organisation's chart? Where do young people figure in it, and with which responsibilities?

<div align="center">

Governing Board
|
Management — Council of users
|
Departments

</div>
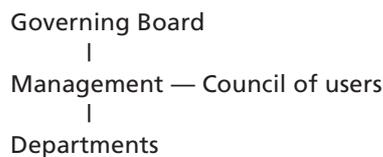
> In the above organisational chart of a regional youth work umbrella organisation, the council of users gives advice to the management (at its request or not), about the policy proposals that relate to the 12 to 23 years old target-group. The young people in the council can give this advice because they take part in various operational activities within the departments, and that is how they are sufficiently informed about the work and the target-group. Participation projects can not exist without there being a policy vision about participation. The policy-makers cannot receive sound advice if young people are not involved at the execution level. The young people's contribution can also occur at the level of the department or at the execution level (on a committee running an activity, for instance). This will then be reflected in the written policy vision of the institution. In this way young people participate in the organisation.

WHAT DEGREE OF PARTICIPATION DOES THE VISION FORESEE?
The American sociologist Hart has identified the following degrees of participation:
1. Manipulation: young people are used for actions. The adults determine the young people's interests, without the latter knowing;
2. Decoration: young people are there to "decorate" an adult action;
3. Redeeming: young people do have a voice, but it is to contribute to a positive image rather than for to give them real influence.
(N.B. These three degrees are not real participation)
4. On the initiative of adults, young people are involved in activities (they are well informed and decide themselves whether they will participate or not).
5. Adults ask young people for advice and they inform them about projects that have been created by adults.
6. Young people participate equally, on the initiative of adults.
7. Young people take the initiative and they are in charge – Hart indicates this is not a realistic situation.
8. Young people take the initiative. Adults and young people make decisions together.
(N.B. This ranking was criticised for its limited usefulness and its one-sidedness. But it is very useful as a way to visualise the degree of participation).

HOW IS THE DECISION-MAKING ORGANISED?

> Fortunately, Eva (using the above example: organisation of YICs) works in a youth work organisation where a council of users has been created. She involves young people at the execution level to know what a YIC should look like. This advice is communicated to the youth council. The decision-making process is rather vague: "The management considers the advice of the youth council during the decision-making process on this particular topic." The advice is therefore not binding. Eva draws up her draft project plan and submits it to the management via her superior. She can execute the project.

• Access and image

The workers examine objectively the accessibility of their organisation and reflect about their own actions as regards the establishment and maintenance of a first contact with young people.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE TAKE THE FIRST INITIATIVE FOR AN ACTIVITY
A young person has made a big step by presenting a question or an idea. The worker shows appreciation and stimulates further contact.

> Milan has always been eager to do something with his ability to create web-sites. Coincidentally, he is at the YIC and notices that the web-site needs to be updated. Besides, he feels that the site is more appropriate for the elderly than for young people. Back home, he thinks about the right approach to take and returns the following day. He proposes to the worker to create a new web-site, appropriate for young people and updated. The worker is enthusiastic as he was unhappy about the lack of ICT knowledge within the organisation. He asks Milan to make an outline of his ideas, and they make a new appointment to meet. Finally, Milan creates a functional and beautiful site for the YIC.

THE WORKER TAKES THE FIRST INITIATIVE FOR AN ACTIVITY
The worker is aware of the appearance of his organisation (image, accessibility, openness, etc).
The worker is aware of his own image (enthusiastic, welcoming, takes young people seriously, uses appropriate language, and so on).
The worker has access to places where young people meet (school, social-cultural work, libraries, youth association, self-organised groups, etc).
The worker is aware of the importance of the first contact (those contacted should be representative for the project and the target-group).
The worker knows the target-group (age, ethnic origin, young people who are difficult to reach) and adapts his approach accordingly (starts the project by recruiting "peers" from the target-group).

> A worker, Hans, wishes to have a new and trendy web-site for the YIC. Only a few young people come to the community centre of his YIC and he already checked that they do not include young people with knowledge about computers,. The regional training centre (ROC) of his city includes students from the entire region. He gives prevention classes at this centre, but the students do not come to the YIC, it is too far. He proposes to make the creation of a new web-site a task at the ROC. The students can then earn study points with it and they can work on the site during the time that they are in the ROC.

THE WORKER AND THE YOUNG PERSON CAN TURN A FIRST CONTACT INTO THE INTENDED ACTIVITY.
The young person knows what he wants and he can talk about it / exchange opinions (initiative of the young person).
The worker is able to recognise the capacity of the young person, to turn his question – possibly not asked yet – into a joint request and to motivate him to work on a good product together.

THE WORKER KNOWS HOW TO MOTIVATE YOUNG PEOPLE AND HOW TO KEEP THEM INVOLVED IN A PROJECT.
Young people love to learn, especially outside the school context.
Meeting other young people and having fun is a central interest of young people.
During each meeting, soft drinks, snacks and fruit are offered free of charge to the young people. The atmosphere is relaxed and cheerful, but in a way that contributes to

good results.

In general, young people want to be involved, they want to be helpful.

Young people know what they are expected to do in a specific activity. They know what they are responsible for, and that they are obliged to fulfil that responsibility.

> When Erik is asked why he prepares and conducts a monthly talk-show in the YIC, presenting a new youth information topic each time, he answers: "I like to do something useful and to help other young people with it". (Erik, 17 years old)

Phase 2 - The preparation of the activity

• Nature of the intended participation

Young people and their contribution are considered to be the basis of youth information work. They are closely involved in the creation of the youth information centre, in its organisation, in the transmission of information and in the production of youth information material. Youth participation is embedded in the organisation in a structural way.

> Young people and workers act as the operational steering group of the YIC, working together on an equal basis.

Young people get involved by accident on the basis of projects, but they stay involved during the whole process (year).

> Astèr takes part in prevention activities at school twice a year: once about fireworks and once about some current topic. Mark participates in a youth panel from the YIC to make an survey of the opinions of young people about sport.

• Objective of the participation project

DRAWING UP THE GLOBAL OBJECTIVE OF THE PARTICIPATION PROJECT.
What do you want to achieve with the young people?

> Eva defined her objective: to draw up a plan for organising YICs in the region, together with young people.

DEFINE THE PROBLEMS.
The definition of a problem appeals to young people and is comprehensible.
How to organise a YIC to attract as many young people as possible and to work in an effective manner?

FORMULATE THE RESULTS YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE.
To be able to measure the success of one's project, one should define the intended result. It should be clear which policy phase is concerned: policy preparation, policy development, policy execution or evaluation of the policy.

> Eva's project to organise YICs is a preparation of policy project and when it is ready we wil have:
> • a description of the appearance of the YIC;
> • a description of how the project will be implemented in practical terms;
> • a comparison of the needs of the project with the available financial means;
> • a project proposal to be presented to the management via the youth council.

• The target-group of the participation project

Define the group you wish to involve in the project as well as the group you wish to reach with it. Terms like all young people from 12 to 25 are a definition, but do not give a clear enough indication of the young people with whom and for whom you want to work.

Make a target-group analysis: describe the group in terms of data such as size of the group, age, sex, origin, income / education, and its characteristics in terms of motivation, interest, etc..

Link the target-group analysis to the objective and to the intended results.
Determine the way to reach the target-group by means of a recruitment plan.

> Eva wants to work on her plan to create YICs with a group that is a reflection of the target-group of the YIC. This means, young people from 12 to 25. She goes to schools in the region and finds 3 young people: one 13 years old (sub-group 12 - 14), one 17 years old (sub-group 15 - 19) and one 21 years old (sub-group 20+). There are two boys and one girl. They each represent a different culture.

Once these conditions have been examined and determined, the plan can be submitted to the decision-makers to determine whether the they support the objective and the intended result of the plan. If not, ask why not so that you can adjust the plans. If the response is positive:
Assess the means in terms of the time and funding for the project that are needed.
Determine whether the continuity is guaranteed and ensure that the project is not dependent on one person alone.

> The young people and Eva present a unexpected plan: to create three YICs in a youth centre and one in a shop. The youngest person (13) indicates that she does not want to go to a YIC at all, no matter how it is organised. It will not be used no matter where it is or how attractive it is. It could be concluded that going to meet the youngest target-group in places where they meet could be the best approach for them. This will influence the method to be used. The recommendation for the middle age group (15 – 19) is for YICs to operate independently of any other institution (such as a shop), as then the accessibility is increased. The plan for a YIC in a shop is prepared. The youth council agree with the conclusions and support the idea of adapting the method and location. The management is surprised but it understands the reasoning behind the proposal. It will examine the question of methods but it is not prepared to invest more money to change the location. In consultation with the youth council, they manage to agree on a plan in phases: first the YIC shop would be organised. After that, a location would be found for a second YIC shop. The YICs linked to youth centres would also get new interiors. Initially, the advice of the young people only concerned the practical organisation of the YICs, but in the end they gave advice on the delivery of information (adapting the method to be used).

• Tasks and profiles of the young people involved

The young people have a useful and clearly specified task. The limits in terms of the responsibilities, rights and duties of the task are well defined.
The task description must enable the young people to indicate to others what they are going to do. This is very important for the reactions of other young people. It is directly related to their motivation (explaining to friends, parents and family).

> Efrim takes part in a think-tank that follows the youth trends in his town. Together with the youth information worker, the think-tank indicates which topics are current so that the YICs can adapt their actions accordingly. Esther takes part in a YIC study group of young people who do prevention work in schools on a current topic.
> A profile of the young people who may be suitable to perform the task is drafted.
> The following elements appear in a profile outline of the young people who will undertake peer group prevention carried out by the YIC and the Health Department together:
> "It concerns young people:
> • who can easily express themselves;
> • who are interested in the topic "Sexually transmitted diseases" and who are not afraid to talk about it with their peers;
> • who are informal leaders of the rank and file of the group (not the leaders) or who have sufficient access to the group;
> • who are available for at least 2 hours a week for a period of 6 weeks".

• Tasks and profiles of the workers

The workers have a clear task and relationship with the young people. Their rights and duties are defined.
The description of the task and function of the worker includes the necessary qualities to work together with young people. These may include:
• Communication skills towards the young people of the target-group.
• Being able to collaborate with young people involved in the proposed projects.
• Knowing the capacities that the target-group needs to achieve the objective of the project.

• Agreements between workers and young people

The young people and workers know their respective rights and duties. The times for meetings, the support to be expected from the workers, the duration of the project and tasks and the responsibilities are clearly described.

> A meeting of the study group "Prevention at school" is held each Tuesday from 4 pm to 5 pm in Jette Boswinkel's room. She provides coffee, tea and biscuits. The reports of the meetings are made by different members of the group each time. A participant who is unable to attend can present apologies until one hour before the meeting. Sam takes care of the necessary photocopies and so on.

The "reward" which is offered to the young people is agreed beforehand. The rewards can vary: a compensation in cash, gifts, a certificate / charter, tickets for concerts or cinema, etc.

> In Jette's project, the prevention workers receive a ticket for a pop concert in the local music hall or a book of their choice for each prevention action carried out. They also receive at least 1 weekend a year of training at an external location.

• Confirming an agreement in the form of a co-operation contract

The participants (workers) know what forms of co-operation are needed in the project. They are able to prepare a contract with the young people involved in the project.
The worker takes the specific needs of the project into account, as well as the specific situation of the individual young person.
(Young people are at school or they have a job. This needs to be taken into consideration when preparing the timetable. What is expected of the young person should correspond to her/his capacities. The young people have a reference group. It may be necessary to include in the contract information about the contents of the project or the circumstances of the work.)

[2.4]

B. SEVERAL PARTICIPATORY METHODS

The method used is closely related to the chosen form of participation. The degree of communication between the young people and the worker is also of great importance (see paragraph 2.5).

Phase 3 - The implementation of the activity

• Method

The participants (young people and workers) are able to think and to act in a methodical way. The workers assess the feasibility of a method.
The choice of the method depends on the chosen form of participation. The enumeration below is not exhaustive. Each form of participation can involve more than one method.

FORMS OF PARTICIPATION IN YOUTH INFORMATION
Youth council:
• Young people make up a council that gives advice to policy-makers, either at their request or without being asked to do so;
• There are many types: youth councils exist in municipalities, institutions, associations;
• The initiative can come from the young people or from the institution.

Youth panel:
- Youth panels are made up in various ways. The participants share their experience in a particular field;
- The initiative generally comes from an organisation or an authority.

Youth debates:
- Young people debate a particular topic. They take a position;
- The initiative generally comes from the authorities.

Young people do research:
- Young people investigate an issue, process and present data;
- The initiative generally comes from an institution or authority.

Young people give information / do prevention work:
- Young people give information or preventive advice to their peers, generally on a specific subject;
- The initiative comes from a young person or from an organisation.

Young people give advice:
- Young people advise other young people on questions which they are concerned about. They can also refer them to an appropriate service;
- The initiative generally comes from an institution.

SOME EXAMPLES OF METHODS USED AND FORMS OF TRAINING:

Peer group prevention:
- Young people are recruited according to a particular profile. They are trained in interviewing techniques, communication skills and the subject of the project.
- Training in the conduct of research, the processing and analysis of the data and the presentation of the results.

Method using a development group, or quality circle:
- The point of departure is a problem or a need to improve the quality of the work;
- Young people and adults are on an equal basis in the group;
- Young people and workers search for solutions by means of a well-defined plan of phases;
- The youth information workers are trained to guide the process.

Training young counsellors:
- Young people are trained to support other young people in their surroundings. The main idea is that young people generally ask their friends and family for information and only go to some organisation afterwards;
- Teach young people to refer someone to another appropriate service.

Skills for panel discussions / debates:
- Young people learn how to express their opinions;
- Young people learn to make a presentation, to reason, to analyse and to convince.

Using quality criteria to improve quality:
- Quality criteria have been developed within the field of youth information in some countries, or the institution has developed a policy to improve quality. Youth information workers learn to apply the checklist method and work to improve quality. This requires the use of other methods too, such as a quality circle.

"Train the trainers" in all these methods
- All training for young people is provided by trainers. The trainers are trained either by external specialists in specific fields (communication, quality control), or by experienced youth information workers experienced in organising training;

NB. Many of these forms of training are already offered by such organisations as the Stichting bevordering Youth participation JP2000+ (Lelystad, Netherlands), In Petto

(Berchem–Antwerp, Belgium), and the Stichting Alexander (Amsterdam, Netherlands).

[2.5]

C. GENERAL AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Phase 4 - The development of the activity

• Communication (young people and workers)

The participants are able to communicate with young people and to reach them in places that they frequent; the young people also have the necessary communication skills and are able to approach workers and policy-makers.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS NEEDED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

What is communication?:
• Distinguishing between sender, receiver, message;
• Distinguishing between, and practising, verbal and non-verbal communication.

Judging one's own communication capacities:
• What are my strong and my weak points in communication?
• How do others see me?

Giving feedback:
• What do I think of the project, the co-operation, etc. and how do I say it?

Asking questions and listening:
• How do I ask relevant questions, how do I go into depth?
• Which ways of listening exist, and which ones should I use?

COMMUNICATION SKILLS NEEDED BY WORKERS

Assessing and increasing one's own communication skills towards young people:
• How do young people see me?
• Which barriers do I see in myself, and how do I deal with them?

Practising reflection and giving feedback:
• What are my strong and weak points in communication?
• Do I go about co-operation in such a way that the intended objectives will be achieved?
• How do I give feedback on the actions of young people and colleagues?

Asking questions and listening:
• Which questions do I ask young people, and how do I do that effectively?
• Which way of listening do I use?

Young people can give all or part of the training, depending on the level of the participants and on the project. A combination involving young people, workers and policy-makers can often make an important contribution to mutual understanding, equal co-operation and quality development.

MEETING TECHNIQUES, USE OF COMMUNICATION MEDIA
• Young people learn the role of participants, the objective of a meeting, how to prepare an agenda and a report, distinguishing between different kinds of communication;
• Young people learn how to use modern communication media (video, radio, television, Internet).
The skills needed depend on what is expected from the young people. If a YIC has a user's council, young people will know how to organise meetings. A peer group knows how to interview and knows the topic. In addition, there are training courses in general skills that are not specifically aimed at young people, but they can be useful when working on a project.

• Project-oriented approach

The participants can understand the project and organise it themselves and (partly) implement it (young people and workers).
The organisation of a project requires many skills that are provided through training modules. They all need to be prepared when organising a project.

WHAT DOES A PROJECT LOOK LIKE?
Does your organisation use a specific project management model? If so, use the simplest version of a youth participation project, i.e. with as few steps as possible and as clear as possible.

If the worker has to prepare the project proposal himself, he can do it as follows:
- Formulate: vision, objective, target-group, phases needed, research on current situation, publicity, people involved, finances (budget), time needed, leader, organisation, information and documentation;
- Do so in three phases: definition, implementation and final phase. When moving to the next phase, a decision has to be made: go to the next phase or not (go / no go). It must be clear in advance who will make that decision. The decision must be based on the evaluation of the previous phase.
- A project has a clear beginning and a clear end.

	PHASE 1: DEFINITION	PHASE 2: EXECUTION	PHASE 3: FINAL PHASE
Vision	Needs, priorities	Brief definition; name project	The vision appears to be correct
Objective	Global definition	Detailed definition of the objective per target-group	Results are measured
Target-group	Temporary definition	Precise target-group	Informing target-group about follow-up
Phases	Temporary plan	Define precise tasks, responsibilities (who, when); training, implementation	Clearly indicate end of project
Research	Consulting lobbies for support	Description of proces; keep track of progress	Final assessment, formulation of conclusions and recommendations
Publicity	First ideas	Communication plan; implementation	Evaluation
People involved	Draft plan of persons to deploy, start to recruit young people	Making co-operation agreements. Who does what, what type of support?	Saying goodbye, rewarding, follow-up
Finances	Calculation of costs, draft budget	Work according to agreed budget	Present final accounts
Time needed	Assessment	Detailed timetable	Planning the end of the project
Leadership	Youth information worker submits a draft project	Tasks, rights and duties as per co-operation agreements	Thank the young people
Organisation running project	Check will to implement the project, check policy and vision	All necessary partners are kept informed	Evaluate whole project and conclude with a party
Information & documentation	Draft project proposal Scenario of the planning and needed research, documentation and finances **Go / not go to Phase 2**	Written work plan Intermediate reports **Go / not go to Phase 3**	Presentation of the final product and /or report

• Publicity and public relations (PR)

The participants (young people and workers) can draw up and carry out a simple communication plan;
What are the communication objectives?
Who are the internal and external communication partners?
What are the communication media?

An example of a communication plan for a youth participation project:

TARGET TARGET-GROUP	INVENTORY OF IDEAS	INFORMING	MOTIVATING TO PARTICIPATE OR TO ORGANISE
INTERNAL			
Direct superior		Discuss project, progress reports	Project
Management		Progress reports	Presentation of project plan
EXTERNAL			made by young people
Young people 12-18 years old	Party, interviews with sub-groups, working at places where young people meet	Web-site, press conference, article in school magazine, flyers	Opening party, mouth-to-mouth publicity via peers from the preparatory group
Municipality	Talk with policy-maker	Progress reports	
Funders, sponsors		Progress reports	
Workers of institutions in co-operating network	Meeting about project, interviews	Website, newsletter, press conference, flyers	

• Networking

The workers can use their existing network in the best way, or they can make new contacts for a successful co-operation:

USING THE NETWORK:
Involve relevant partners in the project: arouse their interest, stress the benefits for them, use their know-how.
Use the young people as an equal partner, as an expert, as support (to give feedback), etc.
Use the network actively yourself, and do not wait inside the YIC for external colleagues to contact you.

[PART III]

The "Working Together" conference

This chapter contains a chronological report of the Working Together conference (Brussels, 2-5 November 2000).

[3.1]	OPENING SESSION
[3.2]	YOUTH PARTICIPATION, YOUTH INFORMATION AND INNOVATION
[3.3]	PROJECT PRESENTATIONS
[3.4]	RESULTS OF THE WORKSHOPS
[3.5]	INFORMING BY ORGANISING: NEW CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH INFORMATION CENTRES
[3.6]	YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CURRENT PRACTICE
[3.7]	YOUTH INFORMATION WORK IN THE FUTURE
[3.8]	CLOSING SESSION

PROJECT PRESENTATIONS ON EVEN PAGES

The "Working Together" Conference

[3.1]

OPENING SESSION

Nico Meisch, President of ERYICA and representative of the Ministry for Family and Youth in Luxembourg, welcomed everybody to the conference which in his view was devoted to a very topical subject:

"The issue of this conference is more than an illustration of what is already happening as regards youth participation and youth information. We will deal with two fundamental aspects of youth information: information as a condition for participation, and information as a means of communication.

Seven years ago, ERYICA elaborated the European Youth Information Charter. The Council of Europe has issued a recommendation to its member states on the same topic. In hearing the presentations of projects today, we will check whether the values promoted by the ERYICA network are still topical, and we will discuss which strategic priorities we can develop for future collaboration within the network.

Participation means being able oneself to make appropriate choices on the basis of professional information of good quality. Youth information has developed from a means to a goal, it has become a symbol and is part of the social identity of the information society. This creates a group that is a part of the information society and a group that is left out of it, as its members cannot use the information channels. It is no longer sufficient to know how and where to obtain information, it is rather necessary to develop the skills to gather information and to know the latest technologies. The Internet is a common good. It is easy to store a lot of information and the search for data takes less time.

Consequently the profession of information worker changes. Is the contrast between the person supplying information and the young person asking for it getting smaller? How to deal with this new reality? What is the role of the professionals? How about the quality of the information? What are the obstacles to accessing information? Isn't it true that we are here to face this new reality together, to build a new information society together? The new skills also embarrass many adults. Luckily young people can use the new technologies more easily than adults can. They have developed the skill to search for the data they want on a computer, for instance by means of keywords and search engines.

This conference will be a concrete step forward in the development of youth information".

Jos van Rillaer, Director-General of the Culture Directorate of the Ministry of the Flemish Community (Belgium) represented the Benelux authorities at the conference. He referred to various recent sustained initiatives in the field of youth participation in several Benelux countries.

"The relations between young people and society change because society changes. The increasing influence of the media and globalisation offer a lot of information containing diverse values and behavioural patterns. They are sometimes totally opposite to the perception of reality of young people. In former days, young people could easily fall back on their social network (family, neighbourhood, class mates) when they had questions. Nowadays, it is no longer self-evident. Personal friendships play an important role. These developments make it necessary to think about the degree of

✗ *J.FK NEWSPAPER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE*

FELDKIRCH, AUSTRIA

• *Target-group*
Young people in Feldkirch (12 - 19 years)

• *Aim*
The target-group is informed about events, projects and interesting topics.

• *Connection with theme of conference*
The youth information centre provides information, youth workers supply facilities, and the young people organise the project themselves, bringing it to the attention of local policy-makers.

• *Description*
An editorial team of 8 young people (with 2 adult supervisors) publishes every two months a newspaper for young people (average: 8 pages per issue). The young team decides the contents (18 topics), does the research, writes the articles and makes suggestions for the layout, which is then finalised by a professional. The 15,000 copies of the paper are distributed to all households, schools and places where young people meet. The paper also has a web-site where young people can present topics.

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participation by young people in society.

Young people ask for more participation, especially at school and in other parts of the social situation. Young people believe they have a right to participate. To young people, the existing participation tools seem boring and made for adults.

This conference has as its objective to discover links between youth information and youth participation. It can undoubtedly contribute to the development of creative methods and approaches to fulfil the requests of young people.

The conference should also contribute to the development of youth information by approaching youth participation as a method, which will be essential for the development of youth information in the next ten years.

Family situations, relationships between parents and children are characterised by negotiations, an image that will be reflected in other situations, including youth information work. Decisions are made through a concerted action between discussion or co-operation partners. The relation between the specialist and the young person changes, which causes a change in the atmosphere, the overcoming of obstacles or not, which is determinant for the success of an information centre".

[3.2]

YOUTH PARTICIPATION,

YOUTH INFORMATION AND INNOVATION

PRESENTATION BY JAN LAURENS HAZEKAMP,
DIRECTOR OF STICHTING ALEXANDER, NETHERLAND (SUMMARY)

When introducing his topic, Jan Laurens Hazekamp made a parallel between the life of young people in the democratic system in the Netherlands and their life in the communist system of the former Soviet Union. He was surprised to notice that there are many similarities in the manner in which both nations consider their young people and in the forms of participation. Both cultures see young people as a different kind of people, people who are marginal or not part of society. They are the object of services and youth policy, and they are not considered equal partners. That is weird.

There is a gap between intentions and reality. Under the influence of the Council of Europe, youth participation has a high priority in Dutch youth policy. Since ten years ago, welfare and youth assistance bodies and schools are legally compelled to organise the participation of their young people. It is easier said than done. Each young person wants to participate. The real art is offering them the possibility to concretise participation in their own way. The bottleneck is the reasoning of offering opportunities in our institutions, in our way. We need to change our adult attitude and organisational culture to take young people seriously.

Jan Laurens Hazekamp gave several illustrations of the fact that organisations often act in accordance with stereotypes of young people, often unwillingly. Young people are troublemakers and incompetent. Many adults feel unsure and uncomfortable near young people, if they are not in a well-defined relationship with the young people (such as teacher / pupil, worker / client). This approach needs to change. Young people can be involved on the basis of their qualities. What is our challenge? What is the challenge facing youth information centres in particular?

Youth information centres are an intermediary between the young person and society, they give information on opportunities and possibilities and help the young person to make choices. Young people inform the centres about their vision of society, their interests and wishes.

It is not sufficient to develop and to apply a new method to obtain youth participation in the organisation. Adults and their organisations will have to learn to deal with young people as partners in their work, their organisation, their policy. This requires a change of culture, which is always a difficult thing.

✘ *JIP TALK-SHOW*

JIP RIJNWAARDEN, NETHERLANDS

- **Target-group**
  Young people (13-21 years)

- **Aim**
  To get young people acquainted with the three-monthly theme of JIP (Youth Information Point) and present the theme in a way that is attractive to young people.

- **Connection with theme of the conference**
  The JIP talk-show is an educational activity, organised by youth workers and adolescents.

- **Description**
  The JIP talk-show is a young people's version of a television talk-show. The aim is for young people to become familiar and interested in youth information topics (every three months the JIP chooses a different theme for its work). Each talk-show consists of regular features: a musical act, a profession, local "hot news" concerning the theme. The young people brainstorm about the subject, select the interesting aspects and take care of the publicity. The show is presented by young people with real flair and zest. Youth workers advise and help if and when needed.

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✘ *FROM ALGEBRA TO PYJAMAS*

CIDJ, BELGIUM

- **Target-group**
  Young people (French-speaking and Flemish) in schools and youth centres, and individuals.
  Young people interested to co-operate as youth workers in the project.

- **Aim**
  Young immigrants by means of intellectual development are given a positive awareness of their origins. The project seeks:
  - to stimulate a greater sense of responsibility
  - to develop a better knowledge of Arab culture
  - to fight against the narrow-minded opinions of extreme right-wing groups

- **Connection with theme of conference**
  The young people have themselves created the exhibition on Arab culture, and have prepared the publication. A neutral and objective message was needed, with empathy for the subject. They had to deal with each other and accept their cultural differences and diverse attitudes.

- **Description**
  A range of activities and discussions around an exhibition called "From Algebra to Pyjamas". Young people with a training in youth work ran the project which is bilingual: French and Flemish.

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There is a need for a new perspective besides the often used method of surveying wishes through youth panels and interviews. Adults can do everything with the information gathered and young people no longer intervene. Young people need a position of influence in their co-operation with professionals, policy-makers and politicians.

One can, for instance, give a temporary research mission to young people, they do all the work: make up the questions, make interviews, process the information and draw conclusions. In that way, they gather the knowledge that the adults need to listen to. Young people like to question other young people, even on a voluntary basis. They feel able to approach authorities and organisations. Other possible roles are that of consultant, planner, inspector and decision-maker. After the presentation of the results, which are often surprising to the professional workers, a real co-operation process can be started.

To give this baggage to young people, there needs to be a co-operation between skilful professionals who are trained and experienced in working with young people and the young people. These workers know the balance between their contribution and that of young people, they create an atmosphere where learning and having fun alternate. The necessary skills need to be practised together first.

Jan Laurens Hazekamp was in favour of peer educators as researchers, consultants, decision-makers and planners in youth participation. Young people train other young people. The process goes both ways: young people and adults learn together what democracy is all about.

The advantages of the aforementioned approach for youth information centres are:
• The quality of the information improves;
• The information is closer to the needs of young people from different cultures and of young people who are not reached until now;
• The function of the youth information centres in the local community are enriched by the promotion of youth participation;
• The work of the youth information centres improves when the young people can judge its quality;
• In any case, it is necessary to support young people in the roles mentioned above, by sharing our professional experience as researcher, consultant, policy-maker and quality controller with young people.

[3.3]

PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

During the three workshop sessions, 16 projects were presented by the young people themselves (and one project outside the workshops). The projects were selected from the many participation projects in youth information centres that had been submitted to the conference organisers, on the basis of differences in the relations between youth information and youth participation, differences in the chosen approach, method and vision within Europe, the refreshing and inspiring value of the project and the participation of young people at the local, regional, national and European level.

The chosen projects can be classified as follows:
1. Projects focusing on youth participation in the production of information material;
2. Projects focusing on youth participation in the interactive and proactive transmission of information;
3. Projects focusing on youth participation in the organisation of youth information work and youth information centres.

✘ *ROOTS OF VIOLENCE*

LA RAFALE, BELGIUM

- *Target-group*
  Young people (6 - 18 years), as well as youth workers, teachers, institutions involved in youth work, and policy-makers.

- *Aim*
  This short film is about the origins of violence and aims to stimulate debate in all places where one can meet young people.

- *Connection with theme of conference*
  A youth group called "La Rafale" have made the film: writing the scenario, acting in it and producing it. Then they lead the discussion after the showing of the film.

- *Description*
  "Roots of Violence" (Racines de violence) is a film, made by six young people from a deprived district of Brussels. It deals with the origin of violence in cities. Violence touches everyone. The film was made entirely by the young people; it is in French and lasts 13 minutes.

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✘ *CD ROM "REDE RECREIO"*

VERTIGEM, PORTUGAL

- *Target-group*
  Young people of all ages

- *Aim*
  To create a pool of information, bringing together a large number of information materials (documents and independent studies) into one product, and to make it possible to use the information in an organised and easy way.

- *Connection with theme of conference*
  The CD-Rom was conceived, developed, produced and evaluated exclusively by young people.

- *Description*
  The project consists of producing a CD-Rom, containing information about nature and free time possibilities.
  It also seeks to make an important contribution to the development of the region of the Sierras de Aire and Candeeiros Nature Park (PNSAC) . This CD-Rom is an essential information tool that allows young people to discover all the possibilities of the villages of Extremadura (a region in Portugal). The information is divided in two main categories, with an interaction between them:
  1) pedagogical information, largely of a scientific nature, to help those working or doing research in the nature park
  2) information about services, activities, projects and products in the field of sports and recreation.

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Projects: youth participation in the production of information material

J.FK NEWSPAPER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE; AMT DER STADT FELDKIRCH, AUSTRIA
J.FK is a newspaper for the young people of Feldkirch. It is edited every 2 months by the editorial staff of 8 young people (circulation of 15,000 copies).

YIC TALK SHOW; JIP, RIJNWAARDEN, NETHERLANDS
Young people present a talk show for young people, dealing with a youth information topic.

DE L'ALGÈBRE AU PYJAMA; CIDJ, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
From algebra to pyjama is a whole series of discussions and animations concerning an exhibition about Arab culture and history. It is made for and by young people.

RACINES DE VIOLENCE; LA RAFALE, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
Young people made a film on violence in the city and show that everybody is concerned by violence.

CD ROM 'REDERECREIO'; VERTIGEM, ARRIMAL, PORTUGAL
This CD-ROM gives information on nature and leisure time in a scenic area. Everything is made by young people.

WWW.GENERATION.NET; MODENA, ITALY
Young people make a magazine for young people on Internet, in collaboration with other European countries.

Projects: youth participation in the transmission of information

• pro-active transmission

YOUTH INFORMATION LINE ABOUT EUROPE; YOUTH INFORMATION CENTRE, CRACOW, POLAND
An information package is made up on the basis of research among Polish young people, concerning their need for information about Europe.

• interactive transmission

YOUTH ENQUIRY SERVICE (Y.E.S.); YOUTH ENQUIRY SERVICE, PERTH, SCOTLAND
Young people run an information centre for young people, together with professionals.

DOC.SHOP; DOC.SHOP, ROTTERDAM, NETHERLANDS
Doc.shop is an information and action point organised for and by young people.

YOUTH TO YOUTH PHONE; MISSS, LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA
A telephone service where young people answer questions asked by other young people.

ADVICE MADE EASY; THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY, MALTBY, ENGLAND
An advice and information project organised for and by young people.

FRIENDSHIP AND PREVENTION; IN PETTO, BERCHEM, BELGIUM
And: Young Advisors; JIP, Zoetermeer, Netherlands
Young people are trained as information and advice workers and are an important link between the target-group and professional workers.

NETSURFER 2; JIP, ROTTERDAM, NETHERLANDS
An information bus that operates as a mobile youth information point and Internet café run for and by young people.

✗ *WWW.GENERATION.NET*

CITY OF MODENA, ITALY

- *Target-group*
  Young people in Europe.

- *Aim*
  The aim of www.generation.net is to create an information channel for the exchange of ideas and opinions of young people, in order to facilitate a better understanding of the different cultures and societies which form the European Union, and to offer different answers and solutions to youth problems.

- *Connection with theme of conference*
  Young people from Modena write articles on topics which interest them. They work with youth information workers and with other organisations in Europe.

- *Description*
  www.generation.net is a magazine aimed at young people and written by young people. The partners in the project are organisations working in the field of youth information, contributing to the project by distance-working. The young people receive training as journalists. The City of Modena provides professional know-how and help with graphic lay out and editing. The topics deal with issues such as work, new trends, drugs, sex, mobility, culture, in all parts of Europe. In addition there are regular features. The articles and surveys are published on the web-site of the magazine in Italian, and for each of them there is either the full translation or an abstract in another official E.U. language.
  The following six organisations are involved in the project, and contribute articles: Infor Jeunes Brussels (Belgium), Centre RÈgional d'Information Jeunesse du Pays de la Loire (France), Vertigem (Portugal), Youth Department of Galicia (Spain) and Information Shop for Young People (Great Britain).
  Anyone interested is welcome to join the project.

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**Projects: youth participation in the organisation
of youth information work and youth information centres**

POINT INFORMATION COMMUNAL (PIC); SERVICE NATIONAL DE LA JEUNESSE, LUXEMBOURG
PICs are information centres at the local (commune) level in Luxembourg where young unemployed people supply other young people with national and international information.

INFORMATION SHOP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE; PENARTH YOUTH PROJECT, PENARTH, WALES
A project organised for and by young people with an information shop and a youth bar.

REGIONAL YOUTH PROJECT; YOUTH COUNCIL, KOKKOLA, FINLAND
Young people from West Finland create information shops in their own city or town.

[3.4]
RESULTS OF THE WORKSHOPS

The projects presented led to a good discussion. The general reaction to the presentation of the pilot projects in the workshops was the following:
• There is a great diversity of projects.
• The exchange of project contents and the corresponding material occurs in a very enthusiastic manner. One can go back home with a lot of new ideas.
• All of the projects are good examples of participation and they produce impressive images.
• There was criticism too; the language used is often too difficult, young people do not understand the questions, and the interpretation slows down the entire process.

The remarks in each workshop about each project are very diverse. We classify them as follows:
1. Points of departure for youth participation
2. Conditions for youth participation
3. Conclusions and statements
4. Suggestions
5. Points of discussion

These items have been presented in a table as follows:

Points of departure for participation

METHODOLOGY
• The project plan mentions equivalence in the co-operation between young people and workers
• The young people can take up their own responsibilities within the project

POLICY
• The work is based on the needs of the young people and it tallies with their standards and values. This can be established by research.

Conditions for participation

YOUNG PEOPLE
• Nice atmosphere, having fun;
• one can learn something;
• the workers and the surroundings give support;
• it is useful, it contributes to a better society

✗ *YOUTH INFORMATION LINE ABOUT EUROPE*

MII–YOUTH INFORMATION CENTRE, KRAKOW, POLAND

- *Target-group*
  Student at school and in further education in Krakow.

- *Aim*
  To research and describe the information needs about the countries of the European Union, and to prepare information materials and distribute them to the target-group.

- *Connection with theme of conference*
  Young people run the project. They discover the value of information, the importance of organising it well and collect relevant information.

- *Description*
  The project was organised in three phases:
  1) a survey was made of the information needs of young Poles about Europe; the young people drafted a questionnaire, and added questions about which kinds of information young Poles could give to Europe, and then the survey was made
  2) the required information was collected and analysed
  3) the information was communicated to the target-group.
  Six important elements were made into role-plays, which were used in schools. An information package was prepared in collaboration with foreign partners, which is available in youth information centres.

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WORKERS
- The young people are aware of what goes on in their immediate surroundings (which groups are present and what they do)

POLICY
- Describe criteria an information worker should meet as the success of a project depends on the support of the worker (vision, knowledge about learning, thinking etc. of young people);
- Make agreements (in writing) on the degree of participation and the participation possibilities of young people

Conclusions and statements

YOUNG PEOPLE
- Young people are drawn in by their peers
- Young people who take part in a project really become interested in the matter
- Participation in a project increases the self-confidence of young people
- Young people love to learn in this way, also because it is a different type of learning than in school
- The co-operation between peers and youth information workers is valuable for both groups: they learn from each other

WORKERS
- Youth information work is not just about giving answers but also about stimulating questions
- Young people are discerning about the quality of a project.
- The presence of young people increases the accessibility of an information service; information given by young people is easier to understand and less threatening; young people stimulate each other
- The youth information worker is a counsellor in the background; he ensures that young people can be themselves, he adjusts, supports and stimulates
- The worker gives feedback on the actions of the young person
- The co-operation between peers and youth information workers is valuable for both groups: they learn from each other

METHODOLOGY
- Peer groups are therefore a very good means, also to be deployed for the communication between young people and society

POLICY
- The authorities must rapidly react to the remarks made by young people about participation procedures of youth platforms

Suggestions

YOUNG PEOPLE
- Go on and do not give up, even though it is not amusing at some times. Talk about any problem that arises in the co-operation

WORKERS
- Make youth information work funny, exciting, interactive, spectacular and fast
- Attract young people by major activities and name the topic you give information on
- Use clear and simple language
- Increase the motivation of the young people; for instance, by giving free tickets for events or by presenting a certificate or diploma
- As a means of PR, make a home-page for computers with information on the location, opening hours and Internet site of the YIC.

METHODOLOGY
- "Learning by doing": let young people get on with it and do not talk too much
- Create user groups to give feedback on the contents of the project

✘ *YOUTH ENQUIRY SERVICE (YES)*

PERTH YOUTH ENQUIRY SERVICE, SCOTLAND

- *Target-group*
  Young people (14 - 25 years) and volunteers from the 4th grade in further education in Perth.

- *Aims*
  1. Raise awareness of the variety of services that YES can offer young people
  2. Make relevant youth information available3. Identify the needs of the target-group
  4. Recruit volunteers and involve them in a personalised portfolio training system
  5. Train volunteers in all aspects of the YES centreand in peer education work.

- *Connection with theme of conference*
  Youth people are involved in all aspects of the youth information centre.

- *Description*
  Young people aim to make an inventory of information, interests and needs of young people. They also assessed the possibilities of YES fulfilling these needs and initiated the training of young people as volunteers. Through this training, a group of young people was selected to undertake peer information work in schools.

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POLICY
- Clearly distinguish between information / advice and assistance. Make youth participation a part of youth work and youth information, not a form of youth welfare.
- Develop a standardised offer of youth information at the national level

Points of discussion

YOUNG PEOPLE
- Youth information can be a permanent activity for youth councils

WORKERS
- Young people should have a reason to co-operate with workers, not the other way around

METHODOLOGY
- Youth participation through peer groups is pro-active as the peers know what goes on in the group, and they can react to it
- A youth information centre is not a youth centre. Young people hanging around there may scare off other young people.

POLICY
- Adults / workers are needed or not
- If the customer-friendliness or subsidy is endangered, the policy-makers should / should not react.

[3.5]

INFORMING BY ORGANISING: NEW CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH INFORMATION CENTRES

A PRESENTATION BY KOEN RAES, PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GHENT, BELGIUM (SUMMARY)

Changes in the work of youth information centres are influenced by changes in the values, perspectives, life-styles and fields of interest of the target-groups (young people in our post-modern societies).

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE HUMAN BEINGS WHO GO TO SCHOOL
More young people go to school, in comparison with the 1960s. This also means that they depend on their parents and that they live at home. The young people are fine about that. The radicalism of the sixties has faded, parents and young people are less opposed to each other. They share the same values and standards, even though those of young people are more pronounced.

CLASS DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE
Still, there are strong differences between the values and standards of young people in general secondary education and young people in professional and technical education, or between the values and standards of young people and their teachers. Young people in professional and technical education have a more authoritarian reasoning, they are more ethnocentric and they are more in favour of punishment. Both groups of young people have little confidence in politics, even though it is expressed in a different manner. 10% of young people admits without hesitating to being racist.

LONELY YOUNG PEOPLE

✘ *DOC.SHOP*

DOC.SHOP, NETHERLANDS

- *Target-group*
  Young people (12 - 24 years) living or going to school in the Prins Alexander district of Rotterdam.

- *Aim*
  1) to provide information, advice and support to the target-group, by giving them the opportunity to make their own choices
  2) to stimulate youth participation in all aspects of the centre, of society and of their own environment.

- *Connection with theme of conference*
  Young people are closely involved in the creation and in the running of the youth information centre.

- *Description*
  Doc.shop is an information and activity centre for young people and run by them. Young people can come to the information centre or join in one of the projects. Since its creation, they are involved in different aspects of the work: the choice of topics, the look and image of the centre, its promotion and its projects.
  Young people can come to the centre and surf on the Internet, look for small jobs and are offered information, advice and support by the professional information workers. Group activities include:
  • Alex Action: 17 young people (13-18 years) who want to organise activities for other youngsters and talk with the local authority about young people's rights and wishes. They study their own environment
  • Prevention campaigns about smoking, drinking, drugs, gambling, including peer-group work
  • the "Praatpaal Project" (Dutch equivalent of young advisors project in Belgium)
  • a newsletter, internet site and newspaper articles by young people for young people.

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The diminishing family size, flexible working hours, fewer public meeting-places and recognition of free will entail the social isolation of a lot of young people. They feel misunderstood and not missed, hereby taking a closer step to suicide. The figures are stable but high. Young people who are not assertive and who are bullied are a greater risk group.

INEPT YOUNG PEOPLE
Many polite forms and manners have been abolished for being authoritarian and they have not been replaced by another etiquette. That is why young people often do not know how they have to behave, they have lost their footing.

EXPRESSIVELY INDIVIDUALISTIC YOUNG PEOPLE
'Zonder Maskers' (without masks) is a current research done by Marc Elchardus (1999, Brussels). It gives an insight into the convictions of young people. It appears they are expressively individualistic. Friendships are a very strong value as they allow them to be themselves and to release their emotions. Developing and discovering oneself, doing what one wants are very important things to young people.

WILL AS A SOURCE OF STANDARDS
One attaches more importance to something one chooses oneself than to something that is given to you. That also means that young people find a friend more important than a brother. Or more precisely: young people attach more importance to what they think they choose themselves. Those choices are more influenced by social determination than young people realise. Some predictions can be deduced from this:
Primary groups will become more monocultural as one chooses friends with the same education and the same cultural interests.
More young people will grow lonely because they are "not chosen".
Relationships become more vulnerable because chosen relationships ask for more effort than "not-chosen" relationships (such as family and neighbours).

SHORT-TERM PERSPECTIVES
Young people commit themselves to concrete ideals, often for a short period. They are interested in society and are prepared to carry on campaigns. These actions have their proper value and do not necessary entail major political reactions. Young people feel a strong relation between ethics and aesthetics, preferences correspond. The taste for music (esthetical), for instance, is also an ethical preference (they stand for it).

LEISURE TIME AND IDENTITY
Young people strongly identify themselves with leisure time, in which music, clothing and having a night out is very important. This is more their environment than family or school. This is an integrated part of their social environment and it expresses value perspectives.

SUBJECTIVELY INDIVIDUALISTIC YOUNG PEOPLE
Young people often think themselves to be very individualistic, yet it is not true (Elchardus, 1999). Young people draw their values more from collective identities than they realise. Still, they experience these values in a very individualistic manner. The research even mentions false consciousness: thinking one has an opinion as an individual, yet just being a member of a group. Nevertheless, this attitude influences social relationships: a commonly shared individualism is not synonymous with collectivism.

THE NEW PAGANISM
The research also reveals that many young people (about 20 %) believe in clairvoyance, reincarnation and UFOs. Themes in rock music, television series and films illustrate this observation. Young people appear to be searching for something beyond this world.

THE MORAL OF IT ALL
The aforementioned research sketches the problematic of the individualisation versus bowing to group standards and values. The less young people are aware of it, the less chances there are that they will profile themselves as self-confident members of this social class.
They are powerless as individuals. They can have power as a group. Existing youth

✗ *YOUTH TO YOUTH PHONE SERVICE*

MISSS, SLOVENIA

- *Target-group*
  1) Children needing help (pre-adolescents)
  2) Young people giving advice by telephone (14 - 18 years).

- *Aim*
  1) to help children with problems to find solutions
  2) to support children and to learn to take responsibility for the target-group, they are given training for this work.

- *Connection with theme of conference*
  The young counsellors do their work as a self-supporting group: they collect information and help each other with methodology. This project is based on a youth information centre, which provides training and technical support.

- *Description*
  Children of the same age as the counsellors phone in with questions and problems. There are now more than 60 young telephone counsellors. The questions are mainly about problems in school and in their social environment from children who come from deprived backgrounds. The telephone counsellors offer help, but at the same time they increase their own knowledge and self-confidence.

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organisations such as Scouts only draw middle- and upper-class young people. Leisure time becomes important and is filled as a group, but the experiencing of it remains very individualistic. The most important lesson that can be drawn from the research is: individualisation and an individualistic self-image do not have a positive influence on the social feeling of belonging and having great dreams. People feel they are thrown upon their own resources, which makes them powerless and easily approachable by extreme right groups.

NEW TASKS FOR YOUTH INFORMATION CENTRES
The conclusions for the work of youth information services:
• Youth information centres should approach young people actively and offer structures for activities that appeal to young people. This is done in co-operation with the network in order to counter social isolation. Besides that, it probably stimulates a new emancipatory awareness of classes.
• Present short-term objectives to young people during prevention work. Do not campaign against smoking because it causes lung cancer, but because a girl does not want to kiss "an ashtray" or a boy with brown teeth. Pick objectives that fit the target-group.
• Use visual language because young people are not used to being influenced by written language but through movies and television.
• Make Internet connections and offer young people the opportunity to surf, chat and create web-sites in many locations.
• The attention paid to differences between groups of young people determines the methodological approach that is appropriate to their field of interest.
• The information supplied in youth centres is current and based on the field of interest of young people (not the "you will need it later" approach as in schools).
• Information centres must present themselves as independent institutions that are not related to welfare or judicial bodies.

[3.6]

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CURRENT PRACTICE

In 1998, the Perth Youth Enquiry Service organised a conference (Blairgowrie, Scotland) in the framework of the ERYICA network to make an inventory of the barriers to youth participation in youth information work, together with possible solutions to those obstacles. This workshop wants to go further than just making an inventory. A link is made between thinking and talking about participation and the implementation of youth participation after returning to the work place. Young people and youth information workers state personal goals to work on youth participation in youth information in spite of the barriers.

Young people and workers are together in this workshop. It consists of two parts.

Participation of young people? Yes, but…..?

For youth participation to be a success, the counter-arguments need to be examined too. Reflection on bottlenecks and a positive search for solutions are the key to success. Many arguments for both sides have been stated in a discussion with so-called groups for and against youth participation.

Those in favour of youth participation named some positive aspects: the pleasure of working with young people, young people have refreshing ideas, they are enthusiastic and critical. Besides that, young people are perfectly able to collaborate in a professional way because they have sufficient experience, know how to express themselves and to make decisions. Young people are better in addressing their own target-group than workers are. Society is obliged to give young people the opportunity to work in a

✗ *ADVICE MADE EASY*

THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY, UNITED KINGDOM

- *Target-group*
  1) Young people (15 - 16 years)
  2) Young people members of the steering-group (14 - 20 years).

- *Aim*
  1) to give advice and information about rights, duties and responsibilities
  2) to co-operate with young people in order to be able to identify better the needs of the target-group. This led to a conference organised by young people where they could make known their ideas and wishes concerning youth information centres.

- *Connection with theme of conference*
  Young people have the opportunity to participate in all aspects of the information centre. They are trained and the effects of the co-operation are noticeable on both sides.

- *Description*
  An advice and information project run for and by young people. The project seeks to work with young people to overcome the barriers to their accessing advice and information services. The young people organise advice and information sessions in schools, using a range of activities such as quizzes, music and computers to engage with young people. A steering-group of young people advise on the appropriateness of the methods and materials used.

  A second aspect of the work is aimed at influencing local advice, information and support services to take the specific needs of young people into account, by organising a conference run by young people.

  This co-operation has had the following results:
  • for the young people in the project: increased possibilities through training, empowerment
  • for the adult workers: more credibility, authenticity and pleasure!
  • for the target-group: the effort of professionals offers great benefits.

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democratic society.

Counter-arguments are that young people are not approached and addressed in the right way. They are often not taken seriously. Their peers react by laughing at participating young people. Workers, on the other hand, have a negative view of the commitment and capacity of their target-group; "They prefer to go out, they are not responsible, or they do not have time". Working with young people takes a lot of energy and time, and the result is minimal. Workers can do it better and faster themselves.

When I come home, I'll start with …

In the second part, each young person and youth information worker drew up a personal plan to start with after the conference. These plans have been grouped and summarised.

As regards the **production of information material**, the following ideas were presented: organising an international training programme; developing new materials and methodologies on the basis of social level, cultural background and so on; organising young people in a focus group and evaluating materials; involving youth councils, for instance, by working on a project together (a guide on youth participation, or a web-site containing information); starting an experiment with young people as information workers and organising a debate, similar to those in the workshops.

As regards the **transmission of information**, there it was proposed: to exchange young people; to give feedback on this conference and to develop a proper methodology; to do research and to survey the way in which young people want to receive information; to inform friends about the possibilities; to start the project of youth advisors; to create a youth panel and finally, to include youth participation as a task in the job description of youth workers.

As regards the **organisation of youth information and youth participation**, the following ideas were presented:
• Involving young people in team meetings, presentations and community council commissions, advice groups and so on;
• Preparing for young people to have more power of decision (making the procedure transparent and open for young people) by examining the limits of participation;
• Making agreements that are understandable and clear for everyone;
• Taking another position in the work process as a worker;
• Making a framework for youth participation in a professional manner, with a good mix of roles;
• Starting national research, distinguishing between urban and rural surroundings.

The plans revealed another item, namely **youth participation in recruitment**. Some ideas were: to reward young people for voluntary work, for instance, by the presentation of a certificate; to employ long-term unemployed of 16-20 years old in a youth information centre; to let young people who already participate in a YIC recruit two other young people; to allow young people to talk about the problems in the region during an informal weekend, and then ask them to help improve the situation; to make a survey of the reasons why young people leave the project; to increase the motivation of young people by showing examples of participation from different countries; to react quickly when young people want to participate and finally, to write an article about the conference.

✘ *FRIENDSHIP AS PREVENTION AND YOUTH ADVISORS*

IN PETTO, BELGIUM and JIP ZOETERMEER, NETHERLANDS

- *Target-group*
  Young people (15 - 19 years), who inform and advise their peers.

- *Aim*
  1) to train the target-group to inform their peers, to support them and if necessary to refer them to professional social services
  2) to obtain feedback on the functioning of information and advice work
  3) to collect information about new trends in the target-group.

- *Connection with theme of conference*
  Young people inform other young people. Communication between young people and the information centres.

- *Description*
  These "youth advisors" form an important link between professional youth workers and young people. In this project, a "youth advisor" does not hold a specific "position" but plays an informal "role"! A youth advisor is first and foremost a young person among young people. Contrary to representatives of students' councils or youth leaders, these young people do not necessarily hold a leading position. A youth advisor is "just a friend" who cares about his or her friends and listens to their questions and problems.
  The project is rather different from traditional forms of peer education. This can also be attributed to the close relationship between the project and youth work: the "informality"; the spare time context; the spontaneity and the autonomy of the young people (they decide what and how!). The interaction can take place in "natural situations": at the pub, in a youth club, on the street, during the break at school. If possible, each prevention message is linked to the place where the high-risk behaviour occurs.

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[3.7]

YOUTH INFORMATION WORK IN THE FUTURE

The mission of this workshop was the following: what will a youth information centre look like in 2010? The youth information centre should meet the following criteria: it fits in with the spirit of the times in 2010, young people are actively involved in everything and such a centre can be found in any European country. Present the form of the youth information centre in an amusing manner to a conference public fit for 2010.
The workshops were target-group oriented, i.e. separate for young people and adults.

Young people believed the youth information centre of 2010 would be as follows:

- There are a lot more information centres
- Information is close to the young people, everybody has access to Internet
- Everybody uses computers, built-in inside their bodies
- Schools have and supply a lot more information of good quality: they have their own information centre and one can use it with one's group for at least one class period a week.
- Young people have more participation at all levels.
- The State automatically addresses young people
- Young people have a say in their municipality
- There is a youth parliament on the national and international level; they deal with prevention work and world problems
- These parliaments are closely related to the YICs
- There are media just for young people, such as television and radio
- There are cultural exchanges with neighbouring countries, which involve co-operation, for instance, in a musical or another major project.

According to the youth information workers, the youth information centre of 2010 would be as described below:

ACTIVITIES:
- Working at the places where young people meet
- Attractive programmes: ticket sales for pop concerts; discount cards on interesting articles; organisation of activities.
- Development of activities on the basis of a survey of needs
- Using the peer education methodology
- Organising workshops on topics that are asked for, led by young people.

SKILLS OF THE STAFF:
- Easily approachable, welcoming
- Flexible, also in the working hours
- Speaks in an understandable and clear manner for young people, without using jargon
- Reliable

DIVERSITY IN THE TEAM:
- Various specialisations
- Young workers. If they are older: still young at heart!
- Good communication skills
- Support and coaching of young people; sensitive to the needs of young people who feel they do not belong to any group.
- Een beetje gek / un peu de folie / crazy!

LOCATION / PHYSICAL PLACE:
- Accessible location
- Free use of Internet

✘ *NETSURFER 2*

JIP ROTTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

- *Target-group*
  Young people, unemployed and / or without any activity during the day because of interrupted training or because of their position in society.

- *Aim*
  To reach the target-group by offering easily accessible information services in places where young people meet, which gives them the possibility to look for information independently via Internet.

- *Connection with theme of conference*
  The project is run by and for young people and uses interactive means of communication in a mobile information centre.

- *Description*
  This Info-bus, which could be visited outside during the conference but was not the subject of any workshop, is a mobile information point and a mobile Internet cafÈ. The bus has been operating since 1988 as a mobile youth information point. The information and advice services are still part of what it offers. Latercomputer equipment and Internet connections were added and additional financial support was found. Technical problems were solved and the bus supports especially underprivileged young people to look for information. This support is offered by other young people specially trained for the purpose. They know what young people consider interesting and teach others the small secrets of the world-wide web. Popular topics are work, studies, music, chat sessions and games. In 8 months the bus reached 485 young people, or an average of 23 young people every 4 hours.

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✘ *MUNICIPAL INFORMATION POINTS*

SERVICE NATIONAL DE LA JEUNESSE, LUXEMBOURG

- *Target-group*
  Young unemployed persons in the community where the PIC is located.

- *Aim*
  To spread national and international information for young people, and to create places where young unemployed persons can work.

- *Connection with theme of conference*
  Young people deliver information to other young people in an information centre.

- *Description*
  The Municipal Information Points (PIC) are sub-offices of the National Centre for Youth Information and Exchanges and they exist in various municipalities in Luxembourg. Their goal is to have young people spreading national and general information .
  The young people seek the information and adapt it, so that it becomes interesting for the target-group, and present it at a Carrousel using flash-cards which summarise essential information on various themes that concern mainly young people. The young workers in PICs are unemployed people who work as a peer group, under a temporary contract. Their training is based on the "learning-by-doing" principle and is practically oriented. The purpose is to prepare people for a complex job.

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- Selection of information on the basis of young people's language and style, according to well-defined criteria

ORGANISATION / MANAGEMENT:
- Using diverse methodologies (such as face-to-face counselling)
- Clear agreements within the network; contacts on the development of a clearer youth policy
- Definition of minimal quality requirements, also in a European charter
- Facilitating youth participation at the local level
- Regular evaluation and adjustment.

[3.8]
CLOSING SESSION

To prepare this session, we gathered suggestions, points of discussions, pros and cons, steps and ideas in a number of propositions. These statements were raised in plenary session as a talk show, presented by JIP Rijnwaarden from the Netherlands (one of the pilot projects) and the chairman of the day.

There follows below a thematic summary of questions and reactions from the audience:

SOCIAL IMPORTANCE
Young people perform better in society if they can take part in the social process. This is not a fad, it is a necessity. Youth participation leads to a change of mentality in society. Without young people, there is no future.

EXPERTISE OF YOUNG PEOPLE
Young people do not want to become experts themselves, they do not want to do everything, professionals are still needed. Young people can do more than just taking part in the production of information material, they can also participate within the structure of an information centre and the process of the work related to it.

METHODICAL ASPECTS
It is an opportunity to let young people inform other young people, for instance, by means of youth councils. The quality will improve as young people know what other young people are interested in. Having young people work in youth information work is comparable to new players in a football team: they are good, but they are not experienced yet. We give them baggage so they can educate themselves and each other to grow into professionals.

Most participants in the conference are enthusiastic and positively critical about the participation of young people. This attitude creates the possibility to organise participation in a good manner and to determine the conditions.

WHAT ARE THE EXTERNAL CONDITIONS FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION?
The internal conditions are individual and therefore too diverse to be discussed in full session. The external conditions, on the other hand, can be enumerated. A method can be developed on the basis of these conditions.

NETWORK
Agencies for youth work, youth councils, schools and libraries are some examples that are given as network participants in youth information work. Youth information as an activity of youth councils is considered a strong point as it leads to a correlation: the transmission of information towards young people is optimal, and youth information facilitates youth participation in this manner.

The interaction between participation and information creates a pro-active situation that can be used to exchange opinions and to activate the network.
A youth information centre is a part of youth work and does not necessarily need to be

✘ *INFORMATION SHOP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE*

PENARTH YOUTH PROJECT, WALES

- *Target-group*
  Young people in Penarth.

- *Aim*
  1) to bring together a group of young people motivated to create a facility for the target-group, such as an information centre
  2) to identify the needs of young people by involving them in the decision-making process.

- *Connection with theme of conference*
  Young people have given shape to the needs which they identified with their peers.

- *Description*
  A project set up by young people for the benefit for young people. They operate an Information Shop for young people and the "Youth Zone" cafÈ for young people.
  The information provided covers all youth information topics, and is delivered by young people and volunteers, who receive training for the purpose. A strong point is the input from the user group: they meet every month and decide on topics to be covered. The management of the institution accepts the recommendations. Two members of the user group sit in the management team, and a member of the management team is an observer in the user group.

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✘ *REGIONAL YOUTH PROJECT*

YOUTH COUNCIL OF KOKKOLA, FINLAND

- *Target-group*
  Young people (15 - 25 years).

- *Aim*
  To develop youth information and other services for young people in four cities.

- *Connection with theme of conference*
  The young people run the project themselves.

- *Description*
  The first step in this project in West Finland was to give the young participants an overview of what youth information work is. The second step was to motivate the young people to create youth information centres in their home towns.
  After starting the new information centres, the third step is to develop the co-operation between the groups of young people still around and to make and implement future plans. Two youth groups which are left are very active and they have plans for a joint project.
  The most important element for the professionals participating in the project was to get help from the young people, who are their most important "working tool" and who really know the needs. For the young people the important part is the participation in youth information work which means a lot for their life and future.

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in a separate location. Working at places where young people meet brings youth information to the spots where young people ask for information. School is an excellent meeting place.

QUALITY
A YIC should be run and based on the real needs of young people. It should not be the showpiece of an institution or an illustration of the efficiency of a youth council.

DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION METHODOLOGY
Youth information as a type of work, and working at places where young people meet is not always given its correct value. Other services often only appreciate it when social welfare is provided. Youth information is not a youth welfare service. The methodology training needs to be very clear about this from the beginning.
Other points to which attention should be paid:
• Methodologies need to be based on respect for young people, and on their autonomy;
• Youth information is an intermediary between the local authorities and the young people. Young people sometimes feel they are not taken seriously. Officials are sometimes afraid of contact with young people because they think young people are unpredictable;
• Youth information workers can report changes in the network of youth work. They can take their responsibilities within the network: they can, for instance, set up a structure to deal with long-term planning;
• Youth information workers exchange knowledge and activities within the network.

CONCLUSION
Yes, youth participation is a mission of youth information work. The positioning of youth information is very important. It occurs where young people are and that is how the young people determine the place for the transmission of information. They also determine the manner in which the work is done. The agencies within the network need to co-operate, and they need to have good mutual contacts.
Youth participation is not only a mission and a method, it is especially an opportunity for youth information to involve young people and to strengthen the network.

Reflections regarding the conference

NICO MEISCH (PRESIDENT OF ERYICA):
Youth participation is topical, it is a fundamental point of interest in society as youth participation contributes to making changes in that society.
Being face-to-face wiith young people, we notice that the relationship adult / young person is not educational (the adult teaching the young person). No, the young person is autonomous and is responsible for her / his own acts, which brings the relationship to the level of real co-operation.
Fortunately, the mistake of not accepting that there are differences between adults and young people has not been made during the conference. Indeed, there are differences because of the different roles young people and adults fulfil. Still, young people and adults can co-operate as partners.
We will discuss the results of this conference during the General Assembly of ERYICA, after the conference. The results will be integrated into the policy vision of ERYICA, and we will make proposals for the realisation of the ideas that require an appropriate practical implementation.

RAYMONDA VERDYCK (BENELUX GOVERNMENTAL GROUP ON YOUTH):
 Mrs Verdyck received a clear impression of what happened during the conference. She stresses two aspects. Firstly, the organisational aspect of the conference. She believes it is quite an achievement to organise a conference with 5 partners in 3 countries. This conference required two years of preparation and the results were encouragingly good. Bringing so many young people and adults together is already an example of youth participation!
Secondly, she talks about the conference itself. Youth information and youth participation are inter-related issues, and they are complementary. The discussion about decision-

making powers on relevant matters: who leads this discussion? The mere fact that this question was asked implies the presence of young people.

Raymonda Verdyck indicates that the Benelux Governmental Group on Youth will continue to deal with youth participation and youth information, paying particular attention to the accessibility of the youth information centres, especially for underprivileged young people, the development of youth participation methods in the widest sense (concrete and not characterised by formal structures), the refreshing nature of young people as a partner in general. The Group on Youth has the conclusions of the conference, and already plans a further seminar in 2001.

Your Comments, Suggestions and News are Welcome!

We invite you to send us your comments on this work-book.

Did you find it useful? Did it inspire you to undertake some action? What are your plans in the future concerning the participation of young people in youth information work?

Please send your comments and news to the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency:

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Youth participation, youth information and innovation

PRESENTATION BY JAN LAURENS HAZEKAMP (ORIGINAL AND COMPLETE TEXT)

1.   Introduction of the theme

For five years I have been manager of an intensive cooperation between the Netherlands and the Russian Federation in the field of youth care and juvenile law innovation. This intensive working together between the Dutch and Russians gave the Russian experts the possibility to profit from our democratic traditions in the youth care system.

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs paid for the programme under the title of 'MATRA/ societal transformation' that stands for a transformation from a communistic to democratic society.

For me it was quite a shock to realize that -although there exist a Dutch democratic tradition for centuries- there actually was not a great difference between Russia and Holland in the way young people are being seen and stereotyped.

During communism it was not done to encourage young people to voice their personal opinions - that could even be dangerous-, but up to now in my own country I can't say that young people are active partners in our democratic institutions. In my own practice I hear most young people say: they won't listen to us! They won't take us seriously! Do Dutch professionals also feel threatened by the idea of young people having a real say in policy matters?

Generally speaking in the Russian and the Dutch culture young people are considered to be adolescents, a special species of mankind, set apart from official society: they are seen as pupils who have to prepare themselves for an adult future and as 'objects' of services and youth policy.

They are hardly being spoken to as citizens and partners with their own ideas and opinions, with their own expertise. That's really weird.

2.   Gap between intentions and reality

Fortunately in recent years youth participation under the influence of the Council of Europe had a high priority in Dutch youth policy. Boys and girls should be more involved in decisions being made about their lives. In the past decade the national government enacted laws which oblige schools, welfare institutions and the youth care system to organize participation in their own way for their target groups to have a say in policies and programmes.

But this is easier said than done.

Young people don't know how to do it, how to discover or how to create the channels along which policy in schools, leisure time, urban planning, social welfare services can be influenced.

But if you ask them - whether they are of high or low educational stream, Dutch or other ethnic origin, boy or girl - 'will you have a say in decisions which regard your life?', the majority say wholeheartedly yes, of course! That is not the problem, the problem is how to give them chances to do it in their own way!

Two weeks ago I attended an international seminar 'Learning democracy, youth participation' in Hannover on the Expo territory. That seminar which had been organized for scientists, policy makers, youth workers and young people (the last category unfortunately were not present), demonstrated to me in the here-and-now what the problem is. The main line was: how can we empower young people to participate in our institutions; how to involve and adapt them to our policy practices. And that is exactly where the bottleneck is indeed.

If we really want to take young people seriously in our democratic processes then we have to change something in our adult attitudes and organization cultures.

3.   Illustrations of the bottlenecks

I will illustrate what I mean with some examples:

A. CONGRESS NOORDWIJKERHOUT; YOUTH CARE PROVINCE ZUIDHOLLAND.
   150 adults; 24 young people (Dutch and ethnic origin; youth panel
   Entrance: young people in the cellar 'over there'
   Dinner: separate, different qualities
   Warning: no interruptions in the adult working groups
   Practice: adults interrupted panel preparation young people
   Stereotype: young people are troublemakers

B. DISCUSSION WITH RED CROSS ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF
   AN INCREASING SHORTAGE OF YOUNG VOLUNTEERS.
   Question: young people in the board?
   Reaction: a young person in the board? My god
   Stereotype: young people are incompetent

C. DEPUTIES OF PROVINCE OF DRENTE; MEETING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE,
   RESEARCH ABOUT RACISM/DISCRIMINATION.
   Afterwards: no contacts; young people isolated, deputies shouldering together, self-satisfied 'we did talk to young people!
   Stereotype: lip service is not a problem

I think it is not necessary to explain these examples: the denial of the competence of young people; treating them as a people of lower rank; no interest in young people as equal and competent partners.
Many adults feel uncertain and uneasy in the company of young people outside their professional relations of teacher/pupil; social worker/client; police/deviant young person and that's why they stick to traditional routines and codes.

4. A new perspective

How to manage it differently? How to involve young people in policy and decision making as equal partners with their own valid styles, codes and routines? What is our challenge? And the challenge of Youth Information Centres in particular?
Youth Information Centres are an intermediary between society and young people: they inform young people about chances and possibilities in society, they enable them to be independent, making choices for themselves.
How to involve young people in policy matters and the offer of the YIC's? How to reach young people who up to now are not contacten and -on first sight- not interested. How to make the information more fitting?
And -may-be- how to offer young people the opportunity to tell the YIC's about their lives, their interests and wishes, and how to give the YIC's the position to be a channel for young people for a better democratic position of young people in society?
It is my strong belief that the often-heard question 'give us some methods to involve young people in our organization' has to be distrusted.
It generally means: 'we will add a new instrument to our professional repertoire and we will use that as professionals as masters of the method'. It also means that use of that method will not change our professional procedures, codes and attitudes.
And thus it is my strong belief that adults and their organizations have to learn how to cope with young people as partners in their work, in their professions, in their organizations and in their politics. That needs a change of culture, and that is not so easy.

Example of Patrick; young man without formal education, a boy from the streets with a criminal background, peer educator of young people on the streets: 'boys and girls are not the problem, but the adults, they have to learn, and they do that slowly, slowly, very very slowly!

5. Examples of promising practices

If we really want to cooperate with young people as partners, working together in our institutions such as the youth care system, the church, the school, the local government and of course the Youth Information Centres, then we need a new perspective. It is not enough if you ask them in classical interviews, surveys and panels what their wishes and opinions are.
In that case only the professionals will profit from the new information about the young generation; they can do what they like with the information: to do something or to do nothing what often is the case. It will leave young people behind, as an 'object' and used as a sheer provider of information. It won't empower them indeed to influence the professional routine, the decisions to be taken, the quality of the offer of the institutions.
It is my strong belief, already evidence-based in my own research practice in the Alexander Foundation, that young people need an empowered position in working together with professionals, policy-makers and politicians. Becoming a researcher on a temporary basis can give them that empowered position. Doing research such as developing questionnaires, executing individual and panel interviews, interpreting the results, provides young people with knowledge. They become experts to whom professionals must listen. And young people like to do it on a voluntary basis, they appreciate being able to talk with their peers as a researcher about life issues and they feel competent to address authorities and organizations.
One example: a Cape Verdian Migrant Youth Organization in Rotterdam conducted research on the position of their peers at-risk, peers with a bleak future. These Young Cape Verdians- so to say- caught young Cape Verdians in coffee

shops, youth centres and on the street. They interviewed them and held panel discussions in varied situations. The results were impressive, and established the Cape Verdian Youth Organization as a strong influence upon the local authorities: they presented their research results to professional and political audiences and were consultants to local officials. All this resulted in many projects and facilities for and with Cape Verdian youth.

This example makes it clear that from the role of young researcher naturally other roles comes forth, in the first place that of consultant, but also as decision maker, planner or inspector.

An example of young people as researcher/consultant

Dutch volunteer organizations like the Red Cross are increasingly noticing that young people are not willing to join there as a volunteer. The question is what are the barriers in the volunteer organizations that prevent young people from participating.

A research programme has been initiated in which a few young volunteers conduct interviews and hold panel discussions with other young volunteers and potential young volunteers. On the basis of these findings a training programme enables the young researchers to act as consultants to directors and members of the Board of volunteer organizations in order to make those organizations more accessible and attractive to young people. The young consultants perform their consultant's role in so-called Flying Teams, each consisting of three members who held consulting sessions within volunteer organizations. This approach has been successful.

Adults were surprised, impressed and sometimes confused and ambivalent to be confronted with young people who confront them with their own shortcomings, give them home work and advice them to do it differently and make a planning with them. It gives a very different perspective on working together!

An example of young people as researcher/inspector

The traditional offer of youth care, especially in residential settings is standardized: the problems of clients are diagnosed and interpreted from the view of the specialized institution, the boys and girls have to fit with the offer; in general there is no question of a dialogue with clients, no partnership with professionals which would help to adapt the offer to the needs of the young people and to improve the quality of the offer with help of the feedback of the young inhabitants of institutions.

The official Inspection of Youth Care inspects the youth care system, and especially the treatment of young people, their aim is to a certain that everything is okay, correct and of good quality.

But it is very interesting, besides the official Inspection of Youth Care to facilitate young people themselves to inspect also the quality of the care institution. That will produce a richer view about the reality of daily practice.

The Alexander Foundation developed a method with which inspection teams on a voluntary basis are formed -consisting of ex-young clients from the institutions. They interview present clients, they perform panels with clients, they interpret the results and after that they present the results to staff and board.

The young people involved are enthusiastic about this approach:

one boy said 'finally we are listened to and get some influence' and a young ex-client-researcher literally said 'we can see in their shoes'!

And afterwards for the group leaders it is quite an experience to meet young clients as their advisors who can give such a balanced view: against their expectations. Then a process of true partnership can start.

To empower young people to become a young researcher and consultant, requires a collaboration of skilled professionals trained and experienced in working together with young people. Those professionals have to facilitate young people, have to find a balance between their own input and the input of the young people, have to create an atmosphere of learning and having fun at the same time. Coaching and training of boys and girls in research, consulting and inspecting practices is always a necessity, as well as writing first drafts of questionnaires, analyses and reports.

In this respect a very promising development in the Netherlands is that young experienced peer educators from all kinds of sectors such as education, youth care, sports, film, theatre, local youth policy soon will have a meeting. One of their aims is to develop a programme in which they can support young people to take an empowered position in youth participation. As a member of the Dutch national Forum for Democratic Development, a Forum to stimulate innovative initiatives in the field of democracy, I am promoting the power of peer educators as researchers, decision makers, consultants and planners in youth participation.

Peer educators as trainers of young people give the guarantee that youth participation will not stay dependent upon the goodwill and the political agenda of individual adults.

A final remark: Apart from the improvement to your own work activating youth to invite them to participate in your professional work not only mean that young people

learn about democracy. But it also means learning democracy together: to be active with young people as partners: a two-sided process.

Back to the Youth Information Centres I hope you will take the opportunity to work out in the work
shops in what ways young people as researchers, consultants inspectors and decision makers can contribute to an improvement of the functioning of the Youth Information Centre:

• To improve the quality of the information by involving young people as researcher and consultant in the information process;
• To take care that the information will be better suited to the needs of different cultures of young people, also to the up-to now- unreached young people
• To enrich the function of the Centres amidst the local community, that means to take the mandate as Youth Information Centre to promote youth participation in the local youth policy, to stimulate local authorities and representatives of institutions to involve young people as researcher, consultant and decision maker in the local community.
• To criticize the functioning of the Youth Information Centres in a constructive way to let young people inspect the quality of them.

At any rate it is necessary to support young people in these roles by sharing your experience as professionals, in them doing research, consultancy, policing and controlling the quality of your work.

APPENDIX 2
Informing by organising:
new challenges for youth information centres

PRESENTATION BY KOEN RAES (ORIGINAL AND COMPLETE TEXT)

Om na te gaan welke veranderingen zich opdringen in de werking van jongeren-informatiecentra is het vooreerst van belang te weten welke veranderingen in waarden, perspectieven, levensstijl en belangstellingssferen zich bij de doelgroep(en), in casu de jongeren in onze postmoderne samenlevingen hebben voorgedaan.

1.   Jongeren zijn schoolgaande wezens

Vanuit sociologisch oogpunt gezien zijn jongeren, veel meer dan vroeger, in onze (post)moderne samenlevingen mensen die naar school gaan en voor wie dat school-gaan, maatschappelijk gezien, hun belangrijkste activiteit is. Jongeren zijn pedagogi-sche projecten. In die zin zijn mensen een steeds langere periode van hun leven 'jon-gere'. Liepen in België in 1960 16% van de twintigjarige jongens en 7% van de twintig-jarige meisjes nog school, dan is dit momenteel reeds meer dan 50%, met zelfs enige voorsprong voor de meisjes. Naar school gaan betekent doorgaans ook; afhankelijk zijn van ouders voor het levensonderhoud enerzijds en nog thuis wonen anderzijds. Inder-daad; jongeren wonen ook steeds langer nog bij hun ouders in. Dat heeft niet alleen met die langere scholingstijd te maken maar ook met het gegeven dat er vandaag, in tegen-stelling tot de zestiger jaren, geen sprake meer is van een 'generatieconflict'. Het verlan-gen om de leeftijd van de volwassenheid te bereiken en om het ouderlijke huis te kun-nen/mogen verlaten, dat zo kenmerkend was voor de jongere generatie in de jaren zes-tig, is thans quasi verdwenen. Waarom zou men ook? Men heeft er zijn natje en zijn droogje, men heeft er een eigen kamer (en ouders kloppen op de deur, wanneer ze bin-nen willen), het lief mag blijven slapen enz.Terwijl de waarden en normen (betreffende gezagsaanspraken, 'premaritale seks', de positie van de vrouw, de legitimiteit van oor-log voeren enz.) van ouderen en jongeren in de zestiger jaren radicaal tegenover elkaar stonden is dat vandaag heel wat minder het geval. Ouderen en jongeren delen dezelfde waarden en normen, zij het dat die bij de jongeren wat meer zijn geprononceerd. Indien er conflicten optreden tussen ouders en jongeren (over de schooluitslagen, het zakgeld, de vrije tijdsbesteding) dan hebben die conflicten eenzelfde waardenbasis, die wel een andere invulling kan krijgen.

2.   Klassenverschillen tussen jongeren

Er zijn wel grote verschillen tussen de waarden en normen van jongeren uit het ASO en van jongeren uit het beroeps - en technische onderwijs, of tussen de waarden en nor-men van jongeren en van hun leerkrachten. Jongeren uit het beroeps - en technisch onderwijs denken over het algemeen meer autoritair, zijn etnocentrischer en voor stren-gere bestraffing en hebben een veel geringer vertrouwen in de politieke instellingen dan jongeren uit het algemeen secundair onderwijs. Terwijl beide niet erg veel vertrou-wen hebben in de politiek zal zich dat bij jongeren uit het beroeps- en technisch onder-wijs vooral uitdrukken in sympathie voor het stoere, tegen het establishment gerichte discours van extreemrechts, terwijl jongeren uit het ASO het groene gedachtegoed meer zullen waarderen als een alternatief. Betekenisvol is ook dat ondertussen 10% van de jongeren zonder schroom van zichzelf erkennen dat ze racist zijn, waaruit blijkt dat het taboe dat sedert WO II hierop rustte (en leidde tot het fameuze 'ik ben geen racist, maar...) stilaan erodeert.

3.   Eenzame jongeren

Door de dalende gezinsgrootte, de flexibilisering van de arbeidsrégimes die ook de gezins-tijd hebben aangetast en door het verdwijnen van een openbaar domein waar jongeren elkaar kunnen ontmoeten, maar ook door de ideologie van de wilssoevereiniteit (zie verder) zijn er behoorlijk wat jongeren die vereenzamen in een wereld waarin zij de ervaring hebben dat niemand hen begrijpt. En iedereen weet dat er een sterke correlatie is tussen de existentiële ervaring 'door niemand gemist te worden' en zelfdoding. De zelfdodingcijfers zijn weliswaar enigszins gestabiliseerd, maar dan toch op een vrij hoog peil. Veel jongeren zijn depressief of melancholisch in een wereld die hen kennelijk geen zin meer aanreiken kan. Vooral jongeren die weinig assertief zijn dreigen in een isolement te belanden en/of het voorwerp te worden van pesterijen waardoor ze nog verder in een spiraal van vereenzamingsprocessen terecht komen.

4. Onbeholpen jongeren

Omdat men heel wat omgangsvormen en beleefdheidscodes als autoritair beschouwde werd daarvan terecht afscheid genomen, maar vaak werden zij niet vervangen door meer egalitaire en democratische codes. Nieuwe codes bleven eenvoudig uit. Daardoor hebben jongeren het soms moeilijk om nog te weten hoe ze zich behoren te gedragen. Permissiviteit leidt hier tot onbeholpenheid die door volwassenen vaak als lompheid wordt ervaren, maar zijn oorzaak vindt in het verdwijnen van 'evidente' omgangsvormen. De mythe van de natuurlijke spontaneïteit heeft eerder geleid tot een volstrekt gebrek aan omgangsvormen dan tot nieuwe, democratischer omgangsvormen en dat heeft behoorlijk wat ankers voor mogelijkheden tot ontmoeting doen verdwijnen.

5. Expressief individualistische jongeren

In Zonder Maskers (1999) biedt de TOR-groep onder leiding van Marc Elchardus ons een duidelijk inzicht in enkele normatieve overtuigingen van adolescenten. De waarden van jongeren sporen sterk met een expressief-individualistische ingesteldheid. De meerderheid van de jongeren schat bijvoorbeeld vriendschappen zeer hoog, omdat ze een emotioneel klankbord vormen waaraan ze alles kwijt kunnen. In vriendschapsrelaties vindt men precies de mogelijkheid om jezelf te kunnen zijn en om spontane vormen van verbondenheid, loyaliteit, vertrouwen en solidariteit te beleven. Ze vinden creativiteit, zichzelf ontdekken, zichzelf zoveel mogelijk ontplooien en trouw zijn aan zichzelf (uiterst) belangrijk, net zoals kunnen doen en laten wat je wilt, zelf uitmaken wat mag en niet mag en van niemand afhankelijk zijn. 'De verzuchting naar zelfontplooiing en naar relaties die gekenmerkt worden door openhartigheid en authenticiteit, is bij een verpletterende meerderheid van leerlingen aanwezig. Zichzelf zijn en zichzelf blijven, ook in relatie met anderen, is voor de meesten een vanzelfsprekend streefdoel. Zelfs het vage en nogal abstracte principe 'zichzelf ontdekken' dat sterk herinnert aan de therapeutische en psychologiserende vertogen uit de welzijnssector van de jaren '70, wordt door een grote meerderheid van jongeren als belangrijk omschreven' (Elchardus, 1999, 104)

6. De wil als bron van normstelling

Dat wijst wellicht ook op een verschuiving waarin 'chosen commitments' belangrijker worden dan 'unchosen commitments'. Vrienden kiest men zelf, familiegenoten en buurtgenoten niet. De waarde van de wilsvrijheid wordt hierbij geaccentueerd: men hecht (steeds) meer waarde aan wat men zelf heeft kunnen kiezen dan aan wat 'gegeven' is. Of, exacter, men hecht meer waarde aan datgene waarvan men de illusie heeft het op basis van een vrije wilsbeslissing te hebben gekozen, want het is best mogelijk dat hier sprake is van een 'vals bewustzijn' (zie verder) in de zin dat die ervaren 'vrije keuze', in werkelijkheid sterk sociaal wordt bepaald.
Met een boutade zou men kunnen stellen dat steeds meer jongeren gewonnen zijn voor de stelling "mijn vrienden zijn belangrijker dan mijn broer of zus - indien ze die nog hebben, want de gezinsgrootte neemt af), want mijn vrienden, die heb ik gekozen'. Indien dit het geval is dan kan men hieruit twee voorspellingen afleiden:
primaire groepen ('peer groups') zullen steeds monocultureler worden, want men kiest zijn vrienden doorgaans binnen hetzelfde opleidingsniveau en met dezelfde culturele interessen. De kans dat een (groot)familie of een buurt (als ongekozen relatieverbanden) gekenmerkt wordt door een veel grotere diversiteit is groot.
Er zullen in toenemende mate jongeren zijn die vereenzamen, omdat ze 'niet gekozen worden' en zich niet meer aan andere netwerken kunnen optrekken. Niet gekozen worden staat dan voor vereenzaming en iedereen weet dat vereenzaming - de ervaring door niemand te worden gemist - een belangrijke voedingsbodem is voor depressies en melancholie en, uiteindelijk suicidair gedrag.
Relatieverbanden zullen veel kwetsbaarder worden, omdat men voor het voortbestaan van gekozen relaties heel wat meer inspanningen moet doen dan voor ongekozen relatieverbanden, die duurzamer zijn. (Groot)ouderschap is blijvend. Dat is niet het geval voor relaties die op vriendschap of liefde zijn gebaseerd : die kunnen uitdoven, bijvoorbeeld waar de affecten veranderen.

7. Korte termijn perspectieven

Als gevolg van het postmoderne wegvallen der grote verhalen worden jongeren in steeds geringere mate aangesproken door grote politieke projecten, ideologieën of godsdiensten. Maar dat wil niet zeggen dat ze niet geëngageerd zouden zijn of niet bekommerd om problemen in de wereld.
Hun engagementen zijn echter concreter en directer: ze pakken projecten aan die ze aankunnen en waarvan ze resultaten kunnen zien: acties om de fietser een prominentere plaats te geven in het verkeer, acties voor beter openbaar vervoer van en naar dansgelegenheden, acties voor meer groen in de stad tot en met acties voor de legalisatie van drugsgebruik. Het is belangrijk dergelijke engagementen op hun eigen waarde te beoor-

delen en niet als 'opstapjes' om jongeren toch maar bij de 'grote politiek' te betrekken. Belangrijk is ook dat er voor jongeren vandaag een sterke correlatie bestaat tussen ethiek en esthetiek en dat esthetische voorkeuren (in termen van kledij, muzikale preferenties) ook steeds ethische voorkeuren zijn. Dat werkt ook door in de manieren waarop ze hun engagement gestalte geven.

8. Vrije tijd en identiteit

Uit ander onderzoek is gebleken dat jongeren zich, althans subjectief, sterk identificeren met de wereld van de vrije tijd, de wereld van de muziek, de televisie, de kledij, het uitgaansleven. De wereld van de vrije tijd wordt, meer dan de school- of de gezinswereld als 'hun' wereld gepercipieerd. (Vercaigne, 1996; Bouverne-De Bie, 1992). Dat is een door en door gecommercialiseerde wereld, die schroomteloos consumeristische idealen van het goede leven, van relaties, van geluk, van seksualiteit en ontspanning op jongere afvuurt. En esthetische voorkeuren zijn altijd ook ethische voorkeuren; zij drukken standpunten uit over de wereld, over wie jongeren - menen te willen - zijn. Zoals Bourdieu (1979) reeds heeft aangetoond zijn esthetische voorkeuren ook sterk gekoppeld aan sociale posities, die een zekere levenshouding inspireren. Kledij, accessoires, houding, muziek, televisieprogramma's, zij maken een integrerend deel uit van de leefwereld van jongeren en zijn middelen om zich in deze wereld te positioneren. Weliswaar gaan alle adolescenten op café (De Witte & Jacobs, 1994, 48-73), maar zij bezoeken niet dezelfde cafés en het imago van een café wordt in zeer sterke mate bepaald door de muziek die er wordt gedraaid. Rock, House, Hardcore, Reggae, Wereldmuziek of Techno spreken verschillende categorieën jongeren aan en drukken andere waardeperspectieven uit. (Laermans, 1995)

9. Subjectief individualistische jongeren

Het is een constante in Elchardus' onderzoek om subjectief beleefde identiteiten te contrasteren met objectief vaststelbare identiteiten. Zo wordt in Zonder Maskers (187-230) de 'individualiseringsthese' van onder andere Ulrich Beck (1992) gehekeld: jongeren denken misschien wel dat ze zeer individualistisch zijn ingesteld, maar in werkelijkheid is dat helemaal niet het geval. 'Het meest opvallende kenmerk van de bestudeerde jongeren', zo schrijft hij, 'lijkt ons precies de enorme tegenstelling en spanning te zijn tussen, enerzijds, het zeer grote belang van collectieve identiteiten, anderzijds de allesoverheersende zelfideologie. De jongeren zijn haast unaniem van oordeel dat het handelen, denken en voelen individueel is en moet zijn, dat het een uiting is en moet zijn van de verwezenlijking van het zelf, niet van de invloeden en de ervaringen die door collectieve identiteiten worden gevormd'. (Elchardus, 1999, 199-200) Maar anderzijds wordt hun identiteit wel degelijk door allerlei collectieve beïnvloedingen te worden gevormd. Hij gewaagt zelfs van een 'vals bewustzijn', zo'n beetje zoals het bewustzijn van 'motards' die zichzelf zeer uitdrukkelijk als 'individualistisch' percipiëren - 'ik tegen de rest van de wereld'- maar in 90% van de gevallen lid blijken te zijn van een club. Het is immers niet leuk om in je eentje 'individualist' te zijn.... Iets vergelijkbaars stelt men vast voor wat esthetische voorkeuren betreft. Terwijl die, subjectief, als zeer persoonlijk worden ervaren, blijken zij in sterke mate met sociale identiteiten te sporen en die sociale identiteiten beïnvloeden dan weer de waarden. Het is overigens zeer de vraag of die aangetroffen tegenstelling tussen 'subjectieve perceptie' en 'objectieve identiteit' de individualiseringsthese helemaal onderuit haalt. Want ook een 'vals' geloof kan haar stempel drukken op sociale verhoudingen. Met andere woorden: zelfs indien jongeren, in werkelijkheid hun waarden veel meer uit collectieve identiteiten putten dan ze zelf beseffen, beleven zij die waarden niettemin op een veel individualistischer manier dan het geval zou zijn indien zij zich ook subjectief van die collectieve dimensie bewust waren. Een 'collectief gedeeld individualisme' is nog geen 'collectivisme'.

10. Het nieuwe paganisme

Opmerkelijk zijn de in Zonder Maskers aangetroffen hoge percentages jongeren (rond de twintig procent) die geloof hechten aan geesten, helderziendheid, reïncarnatie, astrologie en UFO's (ook bij jongvolwassenen trof men reeds dergelijke percentages aan: zie Elchardus & Heyvaert, 1990, 109). Dit spoort naadloos met tal van themata die ook in de rockmuziek sterk aanwezig zijn. (Paglia, 1992) Ook het succes van televisiereeksen als The X-files of van de romans van Stephen King wijzen in dezelfde richting. Het lijkt erop dat jongeren in onze ontluisterde, verzakelijkte, verwetenschappelijkte wereld enigszins teleurgesteld zijn en op zoek zijn naar 'iets' meer. Maar dan niet in de vorm van een geloof in iets transcendents, noch in de vorm van een humanistische levensfilosofie, maar veeleer in de vorm van een geloof in een mysterieuze, immanente kracht die in de wereld schuilt. Hoewel dit wellicht altijd al eigen is geweest aan de adolescentie, zou het toch van arrogantie getuigen dit verschijnsel niet ernstig te nemen, want het spoort naadloos met de 20 à 30 % mensen die kennelijk een groot vertrouwen hebben in alternatieve geneeswijzen.

11. De moraal van het verhaal

In de epiloog ontwikkelen de auteurs van Zonder Maskers een 'cultuuragenda voor het begin van de 21e eeuw', waarin (onder andere) wordt stilgestaan bij de verschillen tussen normatieve opvattingen bij jongeren uit de lagere klasse (met laaggeschoolde ouders en/of zelf schoollopend in het beroepsonderwijs) en jongeren uit de hogere klasse (met hooggeschoolde ouders en/of zelf schoollopend in het algemeen secundair onderwijs). Die verschillen zijn immers frappant: laaggeschoolden zijn veel grotere voorstanders van een zeer harde aanpak van criminaliteit, voelen zich politiek machtelozer, vertonen een hogere graad van sociaal-economisch en cultureel racisme, hebben striktere opvattingen over bio - ethische kwesties en seksuele moraal, zijn traditioneler in hun genderopvattingen, kijken minder optimistisch tegenover het leven aan en geloven iets meer in allerlei vormen van bijgeloof. Maar opvallend is toch dat ze niet erg veel meer gewonnen zijn voor gelijkheid en herverdeling dan de kinderen uit de hogere klassen. Gevoelens van uitsluiting, achterstelling en onbehagen worden niet meer vertolkt in een egalitair politiek project en 'de hoop dat de eigen zwakke positie via politieke actie kan worden opgelost, is nagenoeg verdwenen' (Elchardus, 1999, 214). Het herinnert aan wat Richard Sennett en Jonathan Cobb reeds in de zestiger jaren vaststelden bij Amerikaanse arbeiders en wat zij de 'verborgen kwetsuren' noemen in de identiteit van lagere sociale klassen: men situeert de oorzaken van de eigen achteruitstelling niet in (een socialistische analyse van) de grote maatschappelijke ongelijkheden en men heeft nauwelijks hoop iets aan de eigen inferieure positie te kunnen verhelpen. (Sennett & Cobb, 1973). Dat verklaart waarom zij zich eerder aangesproken voelen door een extreem-rechts, dan door een egalitair vertoog, een vertoog waarvan zij nochtans, als eersten het slachtoffer zullen zijn. Ook hier verwijzen de auteurs van Zonder Maskers weer naar de notie van het 'vals bewustzijn'. Voeg daarbij de 'culture of contentment' onder de middenklassen die door John Kenneth Galbraith (1992) werd beschreven en je krijgt een vrij apathische samenleving met een middenklasse die in de overtuiging leeft dat zij haar relatieve welstand wel degelijk aan zichzelf te danken heeft en een lagere klasse die nog weinig hoop koestert in opwaartse sociale mobiliteit en emancipatie. Zou het kunnen dat onze samenleving een tendens vertoont om te evolueren naar het Amerikaanse samenlevingstype, met heel wat minder bemiddelende instanties tussen overheid en individu? Op subjectief vlak voelen jongeren uit lagere sociale klassen zich alvast, zoals hun Amerikaanse leeftijdsgenoten, heel wat minder aangesproken door een egalitair-emancipatorisch vertoog dan hun generatiegenoten uit de zestiger jaren. Fundamentele vraag is dan ook 'hoe we een nieuwe klassencultuur en een nieuw klassenbewustzijn (kunnen) ontwikkelen, dat weer een humanistische belofte in zich draagt?' (Elchardus, 1999, 216). Duidelijk wordt nu ook waarom de auteurs zich zo sterk tegen de individualiseringsthese verzetten: hoe meer die these ook in het zelfbewustzijn van de laaggeschoolden postvat, hoe geringer de kansen tot collectieve identificatie. Als 'individuen' zijn ze immers machteloos, als zelfbewuste leden van een sociale klasse niet. In zeker opzicht is dit probleem vergelijkbaar met de macht van de consument. Hoewel consumenten, als collectiviteit, een zeer reële macht zouden kunnen uitoefenen op het economisch systeem, beleven zij dat niet zo. Consumenten gedragen zich als individuen, hoewel ze door marketing en reclame wel degelijk als collectiviteit benaderd worden. Hun individualistisch zelfbewustzijn omvormen tot een collectieve wij-identiteit ('wij, consumenten') kan alleen maar door de inzet van sociale organisaties. Niet toevallig hebben Elchardus en zijn team dan ook in ander onderzoek een sterke correlatie gevonden tussen het lidmaatschap van sociale organisaties en democratische gezindheid. Dat ligt niet anders voor jongeren. Jongerenorganisaties zoals scouts- of Chirobeweging, waarin jongeren de mogelijkheid krijgen om met leeftijdsgenoten op te trekken en verantwoordelijkheid op te nemen voor elkaar, bevorderen een positief zelfbeeld en democratisch-politieke reflexen. Helaas spreken ook die bewegingen vandaag hoofdzakelijk jongeren uit de midden- en hogere klassen aan en staan jongeren uit de lagere klassen ook hier in de kou. Er is dus duidelijk nood aan mobiliserende initiatieven terzake, vooral in hoofdstedelijke gebieden, want het 'postmoderne nomadisme' mag dan al door intellectuelen worden bezongen als een bevrijdende identiteit, voor de 'losgeslagen zelven' uit lagere sociale klassen, wordt zij vooral als een 'lot' beleefd waarop zij geen enkele greep meer kunnen uitoefenen. Indien het waar is dat jongeren hun identiteit vooral in de sfeer van de vrije tijd profileren, dan wordt de vergelijking met de positie van de consument in de maatschappij nog versterkt, want de vrije tijdssfeer is bij uitstek een consumptiesfeer die doordrongen is van individualistische waarden.

Consumeren (van muziek, film, drank, kledij) mag dan al een collectief gebeuren zijn (smaken worden in sterke mate sociaal bepaald), het wordt door de participanten individualistisch beleefd.

De thematiek waarvoor de TOR-groep onze aandacht vraagt werd reeds sedert geruime tijd aan de orde gesteld door de Amerikaanse sociale en theoretische beweging van het communitarisme, met, onder andere, Amitai Etzioni, Michael Sandel, Robert Bellah, Phillip Selznick en al wie zich rond het tijdschrift The Responsive Community heeft

gegroepeerd. Het verschil is echter dat er in Europa, in tegenstelling tot de Verenigde Staten, wel degelijk nog een stevig netwerk aan sociale voorzieningen en een stevig middenveld aanwezig is. Alleen blijken ze zich daar niet altijd van bewust te zijn, zo'n beetje zoals de steuntrekker van het OCMW of de student met een studiebeurs die beweren sterk door de 'individualistische levenshouding' te worden geïnspireerd.

Wellicht is dat de belangrijkste les die Elchardus en zijn team reeds in heel wat onderzoek naar voor hebben geschoven: individualisering en een individualistisch zelfbeeld inspireren geenszins humanistische en emancipatorische gezindheden. Waar mensen de ervaring krijgen dat ze op zichzelf teruggeslagen zijn, ervaren zij dit als machteloosheid die hen aanspreekbaar maakt voor extreem-rechtse vertogen. Wie de individualisering bezingt, doet er goed aan met deze sociologische realiteit rekening te houden.

12. Nieuwe taken voor de jongereninformatiecentra

Welke conclusies kunnen we hier nu uit trekken voor de werking van jongereninformatiediensten?

Jongereninformatiecentra zullen minder receptief moeten zijn en meer actief jongeren moeten opsporen en hen organisatieverbanden aanreiken waarin ze activiteiten kunnen ontplooien die hen interesseren. Dat is opbouwwerk, waarbij samenwerkingsverbanden moeten worden ontwikkeld met de jeugdbewegingen en met het jeugdwerk. Het aanreiken of stimuleren van een diversiteit aan organisatieverbanden voor jongeren - en dan vooral van kansarme jongeren - is niet alleen nodig voor het stimuleren van een democratisch bewustzijn, maar ook om vereenzamingsprocessen tegen te gaan. Misschien kan dit ook een bijdrage vormen tot het stimuleren van een nieuw, emancipatorisch klassenbewustzijn. Het aanreiken van participatie- en organisatiemogelijkheden geldt natuurlijk ook voor de jongereninformatiecentra-zélf, die er zich echter wel voor moeten hoeden slechts één bepaald deel van de jeugd aan te trekken. Uit de rechtssociologie weten we hoe belangrijk organisaties zijn voor het doorsijpelen en vulgariseren van informatie, maar ook voor het 'mobiliseren' van die informatie in functie van de eigen belangenverdediging.

Gezien bij jongeren het korte termijn perspectief domineert stellen zich behoorlijk wat problemen, waar men aan preventie wenst te doen, met name in de context van tabaks- of drugsgebruik, geluidsoverlast tot en met seksueel overdraagbare ziekten. Het heeft geen zin het roken onder jongeren te ontraden door campanjes die wijzen op de gevaren van longkanker, want dit risico situeert zich in een al te verre toekomst. Men heeft meer succes met campanjes die wijzen op de relatie tussen roken en bruine tanden of slogans als 'ik rook niet met een asbak'. Maar hoe bereiken we, bijvoorbeeld, jongeren, die we willen wijzen op de gevaren van het al te lang (meer dan 6 uur per week) vertoeven in megadancings of op house- en technoparties, vanuit de wetenschap dat ze, als gevolg daarvan, hun gehoor zullen verliezen op vijftigjarige leeftijd? Ook m.b.t. AIDS stelt men vast dat het preventiedenken vaak nog onvoldoende heeft postgevat in het denken van jongeren. Het gaat er niet om jongeren moraliserend te benaderen in functie van doelstellingen die de hunne niet zijn. Het gaat er wel om een perspectief te vinden waarin solidariteit en verantwoordelijkheid tegenover hun toekomstige zelf een plaats kan krijgen.

Gezien de prominente rol die de beeldtaal speelt in de jongerencultuur en gezien het schoolse milieu nog steeds geen kaas hebben gegeten van beeldcommunicatie kunnen jongereninformatiecentra hier drempelverlagend werken door in hun communicatie met jongeren intens van de beeldtaal gebruik te maken. Zo bijvoorbeeld heeft het weinig zin om seksuele voorlichting via geschreven taal te verspreiden, terwijl de opvattingen van jongeren over seksualiteit vooral via film en televisie gestalte hebben gekregen.

Ook het internet is door jongeren snel aanvaard, zowel om er informatie op te sporen als om er te e-mailen en te chatten, maar we moeten ons hoeden voor een nieuwe informatiekloof. Dat kan door internetaansluitingen niet alleen ter beschikking te stellen in jongereninformatiecentra, maar ook in jeugdcafé's en jeugdhuizen en door jongeren de mogelijkheid te bieden om eigen websites op te starten met informatie die hen interesseert.

De aangestipte kloof tussen jongeren uit het beroeps- en technisch onderwijs en jongeren uit het algemeen secundair onderwijs zal wellicht een andere aanpak vergen van beide doelgroepen, met andere belangstellingspunten, een ander vertoog, andere activiteiten. Ik pleit hierbij niet voor segregatie, maar ben vooral bekommerd om ook kansarme jongeren te betrekken in de werking van jongereninformatiecentra, want zij kunnen zich het minst optrekken aan bestaande sociale netwerken.

Terwijl de informatie die jongeren uit de schoolse context meekrijgen hoofdzakelijk in het teken staat van het 'later', van het beroepsleven waarin men geen jongere meer is, moet de informatie die door jongerencentra wordt aangereikt (en dat is enigszins in tegenspraak met b.) meer in het teken staan van het nu, vertrekkend vanuit de belangstellingssfeer van de jongeren vandaag.

Jongereninformatiecentra moeten er zich voor hoeden om, zoals dat met een deel van het welzijnswerk het geval is, te worden meegesleurd in de tendens waarbij de grenzen tussen informatie- en hulpverlening en taken van sociale controle in elkaar versmelten

(cfr. straathoekwerk). Het vertrouwen van jongeren in objectieve informatie en hulpverlening staat of valt met de mate waarin die hulpverlening onafhankelijk staat van repressieve en disciplinerende intenties. Indien jongereninformatiecentra dan al een agogische finaliteit hebben - en ik denk dat zij die - moeten - hebben, wil hun werk niet vrijblijvend zijn - dan zal die finaliteit vanuit de jongeren-zélf moeten vertrekken en niet vanuit wat volwassenen van jongeren verwachten.

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APPENDIX 3
Programme

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 2ND • DAY 1

AFTERNOON	• Arrival of the participants • Welcome and opening by Nico MEISCH, President of ERYICA • Welcome and introduction by Jos VAN RILLAER, Director General of the Administration for Culture, Ministry of the Flemish Community (Belgium). • Presentation of the Pilot Project "Racines de violence" • Opening lecture on youth participation by Jan HAZEKAMP, Director of Stichting Alexander (the Netherlands).
EVENING	• Meeting of chairs and rapporteurs of the workshops • Ice breaking • Getting to know each other

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FRIDAY NOVEMBER 3TH • DAY 2

MORNING	• Introduction of the day by Xavier ZEEBROEK • Workshop 1: Pro-active transfer "*Youth information line about Europe*" • Workshop 2: Production of material "*JFK-newspaper for young people*" "*JIP-talk-show*" • Workshop 3: The organisation of Youth Information Work "*Point Information Communal*" • Workshop 4: Interactive transfer "*Y.E.S.*"
AFTERNOON	• Workshop 5: Interactive transfer "*DOC.SHOP*" • Workshop 6: The organisation of Youth Information Work "*Information shop for Young People*" • Workshop 7: Production of material "*De l'algèbre au pyjama*" "*Racines de Violence*" • Workshop 8: Interactive transfer " *Youth to youth phone*" • Workshop 9: Interactive transfer "*Advice made easy*" • Workshop 10: Production of material "*WWW Generation*" "*Rede Recreio*" *CD -Rom* • Workshop 11: Interactive transfer "*Friendship as prevention*" "*Youth advisors*" • Workshop 12: Organisation of Youth Information Work "*Regional Youth Information Project*"
EVENING	• Mid-term party at "la Goyola"

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 4TH • DAY 3

MORNING	• Introduction of the day by Koen LAMBERT • Summary of reports of yesterday's presentations, by the rapporteur. • Lecture by Prof. K. RAES, University of Ghent (Belgium, Flemish Community) on future perspectives of youth information. • 3 interactive workshops on the theme "How to develop youth participation in our work"
AFTERNOON	• 3 interactive workshops on the theme: "Shaping the youth information work of the future". *For youngsters* *For youth-workers* *For management / directors of youth information initiatives* • Summary of reports of the workshops A / B / C • Presentation of results of the workshops D / E / F
EVENING	• Music Performance by the MAROCINETTES.

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 5TH • DAY 4

MORNING	• Conclusions by the rapporteur of the conference • Panel discussion with young people and conference participants. • Reactions by a representative of ERYICA and a representative of the Benelux Group on Youth. • Closing of the conference

APPENDIX 4

Evaluation

At the end of the conference, the participants completed evaluation forms. We processed the results of these evaluations into graphs that are included in this work-book. The remarks made in answer to open questions are given below:

Programme

- The presentation by Koen Raes was not very suitable for young people;
- The presentation by Jan Hazekamp was stimulating;
- The workshops were the most interesting part;
- My goal was to gather ideas and to collaborate with persons who have an interesting project. I achieved it.

Comments on content

- The conclusions in the final session were clear.
- Great conference; congratulations on the organisation.
- Actually, nobody could be against participation.
- The final session was partly a repetition of the workshops.

Organisation and place

- The translation was fine, especially considering that the translators were students.
- The rooms were not suitable for persons with an allergy.
- The vegetarian food left a lot to be desired.
- Adapt the food to young people.
- The movie in the workshop on Friday was not translated, too bad.
- Too little free time, especially for the young people.
- No time to visit the city.
- No break during the final session.
- The dance was nice.
- The possibility to stay for a longer or shorter period should have been foreseen.

Appendix 5
List of Participants

- Austria, Feldkirch,
  GSTEU Anja
- Austria, Feldkirch,
  KOECK Benjamin
- Austria, Feldkirch,
  NAYER Tanja
- Austria, Feldkirch,
  STRAUSS Wolfgang

- Belarus, Minsk,
  KLIKUNOU Andrei

- Belgium, St.Vith,
  CZAJA Brigitte
- Belgium, Bruxelles,
  EL MAOUFIK Nazira
- Belgium, Bruxelles,
  URBINA Andrea
- Belgium, Bruxelles,
  VANDERBORGHT Pierre
- Belgium, Bruxelles,
  Christina
- Belgium, Brussel,
  BASTIAENS Koen
- Belgium, Brussel,
  BERGHS Bjorn
- Belgium, Leuven,
  BRUGGEMAN Eric
- Belgium, Bruxelles,
  KOTHER Nathalie
- Belgium, Brussel,
  LAMBERT Koen
- Belgium, Antwerpen,
  SIERA Robrecht
- Belgium, Eupen,
  WETZELAER Véronique
- Belgium, Bruxelles,
  ZEEBROEK Xavier
- Belgium, Antwerpen,
  BRUFFAERT Matijs
- Belgium, Antwerpen,
  DE CONINCK Barbara
- Belgium, Bruxelles,
  MADANI Nawal
- Belgium, Bruxelles,
  NAJAR Mohamed
- Belgium, Bruxelles,
  OGEMBA Ngongo
- Belgium, Bruxelles,
  SAOUDI Najwa

- Belgium, Bruxelles,
  VAN CAUTER Catherine
- Belgium, Antwerpen,
  VAN HUMBEEK Eric
- Belgium, Tournai,
  BOUQUELLE Jean Luc
- Belgium, Namur,
  MAROTTE Françoise
- Belgium, Bruxelles,
  PEUBLA PRADO Olivier
- Belgium, Brussel,
  VANHEE Jan
- Belgium, Antwerpen,
  DE WOLF Bianca
- Belgium, Gent,
  VAN HUMMELEN Lieve
- Belgium, Antwerpen,
  VAN LOMMEL Kristien

- Bulgaria, Sofia,
  KIREV Philip Simeonov

- Czech Republic, Praha,
  TUZILOVÁ Michaela

- Finland, Espoo,
  KAUPPINEN Tarja
- Finland, Koustinen,
  HOSIOJA Annakaisa
- Finland, Helsinki,
  TIMONEN-VERMA Päivi
- Finland, Kokkola,
  PIETILÄ Mikä
- Finland, Kokkola,
  ISOTALUS Tiina
- Finland, Turku,
  AHOKAS Kaisa

- France, Paris,
  CHARBONNEL Bernard

- Greece, Drama,
  KOUTSOUKOS Georgios Thomas

- Ireland, Dublin,
  NEWMAN Frances

- Italy, Torino,
  ARDITO Claudio

- Italy, Modena,
  DÉVÉ Isabelle

- Italy, Modena,
  FORGHIERI Claudio

- Italy, Modena,
  GUALANDI Davide

- Luxembourg, Luxembourg,
  HEMMER Days

- Luxembourg, Luxembourg,
  MEISCH Nico

- Luxembourg, Luxembourg,
  DOS SANTOS Rodriques Gorete

- Luxembourg, Luxembourg,
  MULLER Raymonde

- Luxembourg, Luxembourg,
  PIENS Marie-Joëlle

- Netherlands, Utrecht,
  FABRI Wil

- Netherlands, Enschede,
  BAARS Elfriede

- Netherlands, Zoetermeer,
  COCK Jane

- Netherlands, Tilburg,
  RUTJES Leo

- Netherlands, Lobith,
  PEETERS Claudia

- Netherlands, Lobith,
  KUPPENS Geerd

- Netherlands, Rotterdam,
  SCHEENSTRA Mariëtte

- Netherlands, Den Haag,
  SCHELLING Fietje

- Netherlands, Zoetermeer,
  VAN BIJNEN Marieke

- Netherlands, Rotterdam,
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  VAN LEEUWEN Bram

- Netherlands, Rotterdam,
  WEITENBERG Tjeerd

- Netherlands, Den Haag,
  HOUWER Julia

- Netherlands, Utrecht,
  KELDER Tessa

- Netherlands, Amsterdam,
  HERSBACH John

- Netherlands, Zevenaar,
  MARTENS Eric

- Netherlands, Eersel,
  SCHELLENS Sjaan

- Netherlands, Tilburg,
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  SIF Vik

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- Portugal, Leiria,
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- UK, Penarth,
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WORKING TOGETHER

YOUTH PARTICIPATION:
A MISSION AND A METHOD FOR YOUTH INFORMATION WORK

This work-book is based on the results of the **Working Together** conference that took place in Brussels (2-5 November 2000). With the conference and this work-book, we aim to promote youth participation as a mission and a method in youth information work.

A total of 75 youth information workers (practitioners and managers) and 30 young people from 20 different countries participated in the conference.

Based on a draft version of this work-book, a expert meeting was organised in Brussels on 15 March 2001, involving 30 specialists from the Benelux countries. The results of that meeting are incorporated in this work-book.

The Working Together Steering-Group, responsible for the preparation, organisation and follow-up of the conference, hopes that this work-book will help young people to be actively involved in youth information work in Europe, whether it is in the production of information, the distribution of information or in the organisation of youth information work itself.

WTH THE COOPERATION OF:

IN PETTO, JEUGDDIENST INFORMATIE EN PREVENTIE (FLANDERS)

INFOR JEUNES (WALLONIE)

JINT (FLANDERS)

STICHTING JEUGDINFORMATIE (HOLLAND)

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SUPPORTED BY:

BENELUX

EU-YOUTH

ERYICA