

ERYICA Newsletter

europaean information for local youth information and counselling centres

FRIENDSHIP AS A MEANS OF PREVENTION

Flanders: Working with Young Advisors

A study carried out by the youth information and counselling sector in Flanders demonstrates that young people are simply not aware of what help there is on offer. And if they do know about it, they only make use of it very reluctantly. Often they only come to a Youth Advice Centre (JAC) when their problems have escalated. These findings prompted the JACs to start training young people as "advisors" in 1991. The Flemish Ministry for Health Policy in 1995 gave In Petto the task of developing the project in a systematic way.

In the project, JACs train and coach young people (between the ages of 15 and 19) in their own environment (school, free-time) in how to support and help other young people, and how to introduce them to professional counselling if it is needed. These young advisors are gradually becoming indispensable links between professional advisors and their target-group.

The young advisor approach is based on the positive powers of support and influence which spontaneously arise among young people. The concept seeks to stimulate and reinforce that process. The role of young advisors is therefore defined by what young people do for and with their friends. Who are these young advisors? The answer is average young people. In the peer group to which the young advisors belong, it is their informal role which is the key element. The 'trainee young advisor' is addressed first and foremost as a person and an individual. They are usually young people whom their friends see as "someone with a shoulder you can cry on, who is a good listener, to whom you can talk about your problems...".

The strength of a young advisor lies in the fact that s/he can provide support when professional counselling is not there to do it. A pat on the back, some words of encouragement, freeing up time to listen to people, these are the spontaneous reactions which are so important. Being able to recognise the importance of this support and

to reinforce it are essential parts of the training to become a young advisor. By linking the roles of 'offering support' and 'referring people to a relevant service', the young advisor can call on the help of professional counselling if the need for support goes beyond his/her capacities.

The young advisor project seeks to make use of the informal networks that exist among young people. The impact of the method is therefore very difficult to measure. Even so, there is a growing feeling that this strategy is bearing fruit in the area of prevention. A centre which can get closer to youth culture through young advisors has already made significant progress. When a centre can subsequently reach young people whom it would otherwise not be able to reach (or would reach too late), this can be considered preventive action. It only becomes a successful formula from the moment that the young advisors can develop the forms of support and responsibility that exist among young people. The extent to which these three objectives can be met is difficult to assess, but the experience of the centres that are already working with young advisors has been very positive.

In Petto has produced a booklet and video about the project. For further information, contact Robrecht Siera (robrecht@inpetto-jeugdendienst.be).

ERYICA-EURODESK CO-OPERATION

In 1999 a European training project was jointly organised by ERYICA and Eurodesk, with financial assistance from the Youth for Europe programme of the European Union. In a series of four training seminars (in Marly-le-Roi / France, Dublin, Molina / Spain and Edinburgh) 100 youth information workers from local services operating the Eurodesk service were introduced to the European dimension of Eurodesk, as well as to INFomobil and other services on Internet. The seminars also dealt with FAQs (frequently asked questions), and the skills needed to deliver European information to young people.



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NEXT ISSUE

Material for the next issue of the Newsletter should be sent, before

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preferably as a file attached to an E-mail message, to the ERYICA Secretariat (e-mail address: sgeryica@aol.com).

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EUROPEAN UNION: NEW YOUTH PROGRAMME

Following the reorganisation of the European Commission at the beginning of the year, the Youth Programme is part of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture, headed by Mrs. Viviane Reding from Luxembourg.

This Directorate-General now also includes Training, Sport and parts of the Public Information role carried out by the former DG.10. In the new structure, the Youth Unit is divided into two parts: Youth Policy, and Youth Programme.

Although the details of the Youth Programme have still to be published officially, it is known that it will continue a number of existing actions, in particular the Youth for Europe programme and European Voluntary Service. It also supports Youth Initiatives, "Joint Actions" with other EU programmes in the field of education and vocational training, and "Support Measures" for youth worker training, information campaigns and studies on youth.

Agreement was reached on 29 February concerning the budget and length of the Programme: 520 million Euros over 7 years (2000 – 2006). The fact that the Member States, Commission and European Parliament were not able to agree on the budget before the end of 1999 has meant that the Programme was not in place on 1 January 2000 as it should have been and that it will probably start in May after its publication in the Official Journal.

Further information:
www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/youth.html ERYICA NEWS

INFO MOBIL 2000

As of the end of last year, a new version of the INFOmobil service is available on the ERYICA Web-site: www.eryica.org.

Organised in a similar way to the earlier versions, the service now covers the following 20 countries, in English and either French or the language of the country: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France; Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands (under preparation), Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom.

Each country section of the service provides information about education, employment and training systems, accommodation for young people, cultural, sporting and leisure activities, youth rights and opportunities, social welfare and other practical services.

All comments and suggestions concerning the content of INFOmobil, from young people and from persons working with young people, will be most welcome and should be addressed to the ERYICA Secretariat.

Important: The version of INFOmobil on the ERYICA Web-site is the ONLY one which is updated periodically by the "source" organisations in each country. If you find a Web-site which is using an old version (96, 98), please note the address of the site and inform ERYICA.

10TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 10th ERYICA General Assembly was held in France (Marly-le-Roi) on 3-5 December 1999, bringing together 30 participants from 18 countries.

On the basis of the Report of Activities in 1999, the Assembly reviewed the increasing range of services provided by the Agency to its members: training, country studies of how generalist youth information is organised, web-site, and co-operation with other European youth networks. It then adopted the Work Programme and Budget for 2000.

Copies of the Report of Activities in 1999, and the Work Programme for 2000, are available on request from the ERYICA Secretariat.

NEW MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

Towards the end of 1999, ERYICA admitted the following two organisations into membership:

- Youth Board of Cyprus (as an Affiliated Organisation)
- Centre d'information et de documentation pour jeunes from the French Community of Belgium (as a full member).

This brings the total membership of the Agency, including the organisations which co-operate without being members, to 48 organisations from 33 countries.

NEW BUREAU

Following a change in the Austrian representative and two other new appointments, the ERYICA Bureau is now composed of the following persons:

President: Nico Meisch (Luxembourg)
Vice-Presidents: Jacques Thiolat (France), Frances Newman (Ireland)
Treasurer: Dan McCool (United Kingdom)

Members: Erich Pauser (Austria), Ljubo Raicevic (Slovenia)

Ex officio: Jon Alexander (Secretary-General).