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2011:
Celebrating 10 Years of YEPP!



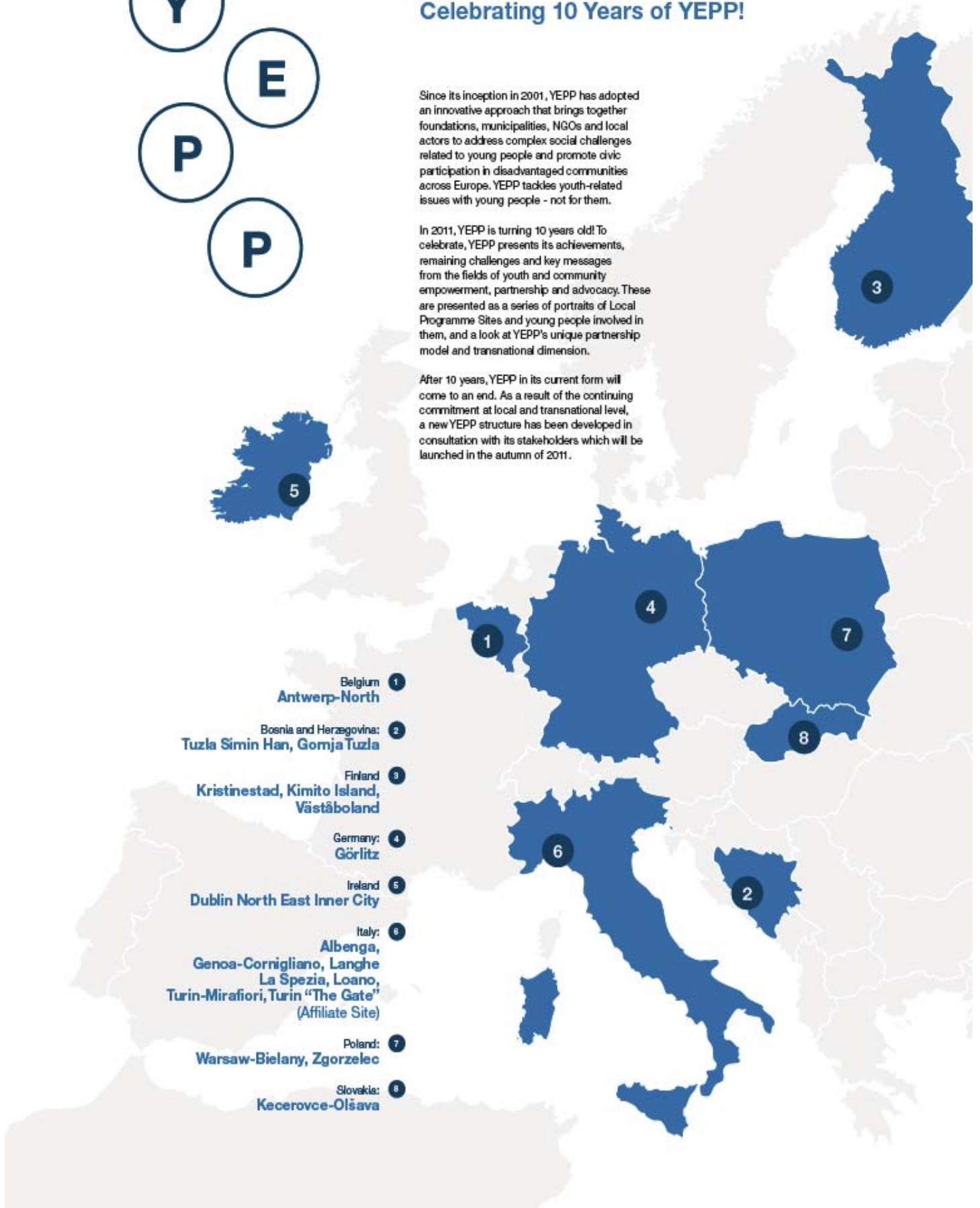


2011: Celebrating 10 Years of YEPP!

Since its inception in 2001, YEPP has adopted an innovative approach that brings together foundations, municipalities, NGOs and local actors to address complex social challenges related to young people and promote civic participation in disadvantaged communities across Europe. YEPP tackles youth-related issues with young people - not for them.

In 2011, YEPP is turning 10 years old! To celebrate, YEPP presents its achievements, remaining challenges and key messages from the fields of youth and community empowerment, partnership and advocacy. These are presented as a series of portraits of Local Programme Sites and young people involved in them, and a look at YEPP's unique partnership model and transnational dimension.

After 10 years, YEPP in its current form will come to an end. As a result of the continuing commitment at local and transnational level, a new YEPP structure has been developed in consultation with its stakeholders which will be launched in the autumn of 2011.



- 1 Belgium
Antwerp-North
- 2 Bosnia and Herzegovina:
Tuzla Simin Han, Gornja Tuzla
- 3 Finland
Kristinestad, Kimito Island,
Väståboland
- 4 Germany:
Görlitz
- 5 Ireland
Dublin North East Inner City
- 6 Italy:
Albenga,
Genoa-Cornigliano, Langhe
La Spezia, Loano,
Turin-Mirafiori, Turin "The Gate"
(Affiliate Site)
- 7 Poland:
Warsaw-Bielany, Zgorzelec
- 8 Slovakia:
Kečerovce-Oľšava

YEPP 2001 – 2011

The Youth Empowerment Partnership Programme

Mission, goals and guiding principles

YEPP's mission is to develop a sustainable, participatory process that creates an active civil society involving disadvantaged young people from across Europe.

YEPP pursues three goals:

● Youth and community empowerment

To empower disadvantaged young people to take control of their lives and to contribute to their local communities as equals alongside community leaders, thus becoming active citizens of their national societies and Europe; to embed youth empowerment in community empowerment that promotes changes to the environment in which children and youth develop.

● Partnership

To form strong and sustainable cross-sectorial partnerships and strategic alliances at local, national and transnational levels fostering youth and community empowerment.

● Advocacy

To ensure that the principles of youth empowerment, community empowerment and partnership become integral to public and independent sector policy across Europe.

The common ground shared by the members of the YEPP community includes a set of 10 guiding principles that underpin all levels of the programme. This includes the principle that young people are agents of change, not merely recipients of assistance.

The Youth Empowerment Partnership Programme (YEPP) was launched in 2001 by a group of European and US foundations, the OECD and the International Academy at the Free University of Berlin (INA) under the auspices of the Network of European Foundations (NEF). The partners in YEPP set out to bring together their collective resources to create synergies and establish an innovative, high-quality, long-term programme to fight social exclusion. Starting with seven Local Programme Sites in 2001, YEPP is now active in 18 sites in Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Slovakia. The aim is to improve the lives of disadvantaged young people by supporting and encouraging them to become agents of change, while developing sustainable solutions that influence policies and produce systemic change in disadvantaged communities across Europe.

What YEPP does

YEPP implements a multi-level approach integrating work at local, regional, national and transnational level.

At the local level, stakeholders form Local Support Groups, building cross-sectorial partnerships and engaging in strategic planning based on the YEPP Concept of Change. This concept includes the Cycle of Change - an on-going process of situation analysis, action and reflection in which local actors and young people develop and implement an operational plan to address important issues facing their communities. They also develop a monitoring and evaluation plan based on the Participatory YEPP Monitoring and Evaluation Design (PYME). The whole process, including fund-raising for the activities, is supported by a local coordinator and an evaluation facilitator.

At the regional and national level, local teams and their partners provide peer support and establish alliances in order to increase their influence on policy change.

At the transnational level, the Steering Committee supervises the Programme. Under the leadership of the Programme Director, the four-member Programme Team is in charge of the overall Programme development, implementation, evaluation and dissemination. It provides resources and services including methodological support, capacity-building, consultancy, organisation of and fund-raising for transnational events, trainings and exchanges, as well as the overall evaluation and assessment of the programme goals. The Programme Team also promotes the expansion of the programme and advocacy at European level.

The EmpowerMediaNetwork (EMN) is a joint project initiated during Phase I which supports youth and community empowerment through communication with young people using digital technologies.

Origins and history

Supported by the European Foundation Centre, the Programme originated in 2001 as a partnership of European and US foundations including the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Compagnia di San Paolo, Evens Foundation, European Cultural Foundation, Fondation Bernheim, Ford Foundation, Foundation for Swedish Culture in Finland, Freudenberg Stiftung, and Irish Youth Foundation. These foundations have worked in partnership with INA and the OECD under the auspices of NEF. Representatives of these partners have held positions on the Steering Committee.

Phase I of the Programme (2001-2006) started with seven Local Programme Sites in six European countries. After internal and external assessments of Phase I and of the on-going needs of disadvantaged young people, the YEPP partners decided to extend the Programme further from 2007 to 2011.

YEPP's Cycle of Change





Phase II of the Programme has focused on advocating for policies that support youth and community empowerment, social inclusion and active citizenship of young people living in disadvantaged communities. In order to achieve this goal, the Programme has been committed to consolidating, scaling up and expanding its activities by engaging new partners and establishing new Local Programme Sites throughout Europe.

The achievements

The qualitative and quantitative growth of the Programme and the results of the participatory monitoring and evaluation provided evidence that significant and sustainable changes in youth and community empowerment, cross-sectorial partnership, youth policies and youth funding were achieved in the local communities during the 10 years of the Programme.



As members of the Local Support Group, young people had opportunities to engage in local decision-making processes and to initiate projects with their peers for their peers and for their communities. Other mechanisms for young people to become agents of change include the Youth Bank scheme, which is run by young people who award grants to community projects designed by their peers. The Programme opened new opportunities to get young people's voices heard, from transnational workshops and trainings on youth participation and advocacy to engaging in dialogue with local and European decision-makers.

The Programme's overall goal of partnership proved to be best promoted by the Local Support Groups. This model can now be regarded as a best practice tool for sustainable cross-sectorial partnership that includes stakeholders from local NGOs, foundations, municipalities and residents who are united by common goals, actions and ideas.



The Programme's goal of building partnerships resulted in sustainable cooperation between local and transnational stakeholders. YEPP partner foundations played an active role in steering the Programme while enabling local coordinators to work hand-in-hand with young people, grass-roots organisations, local foundations and city officials to develop new structures to support the self-esteem and voices of disadvantaged young people and their communities.

Some Local Support Groups established not-for-profit associations and community foundations which included YEPP in their portfolio for sustaining the way of working and the achievements. Local Support Groups also provided the opportunity for inter-generational cooperation, which was appreciated by the local stakeholders. Some Local Support Groups are operated entirely by young people.

With regard to the Programme goal of advocacy, the evaluation showed that the YEPP approach had been adopted by some local governments when designing youth policies. In other Local Programme Sites, the approach enhanced and strengthened existing youth policies by shifting the focus from doing something *for* young people to doing something *with* young people.

The future

After 10 years of successful development, a consultation process has taken place within the YEPP community and a decision has been reached about the future of YEPP. Almost all of the Local Programme Sites confirmed that they will continue working with the YEPP concept and that they want to see a continuation of the current YEPP transnational support structure.

It is planned that YEPP will evolve from a foundation-led programme to a not-for-profit registered organisation. The "YEPP International Resource Organisation" will support the development and expansion of the YEPP Community based on the "YEPP Manifesto", which will define the values, principles, concept of change and working methods of YEPP and what it means to be a YEPP Site. The new organisation will provide services meeting the needs of Local Programme Sites on relevant issues. These services shall include technical assistance, capacity-building, trainings, transnational activities, network events, consultancy during site visits, manuals, handbooks and involvement in advocacy.

During a six-month transition phase, YEPP will prepare for the establishment of the new organisation, which is scheduled to start operating in January 2012. This significant step can be considered a major achievement to mark the 10 years of a foundation-led partnership, opening the way for sustainable growth and implementation of YEPP's unique approach to youth and community empowerment.

For more information on YEPP and its activities, visit the YEPP website:
www.yepp-community.org

Antwerp-North: a unique model of neighbourhood empowerment

Area/city:

Antwerp-North

Country:

Belgium

Key facts & figures:

More than 40,000 inhabitants

**100 nationalities
50 languages**

An area of diversity, unemployment and social exclusion

Antwerp-North is a disadvantaged area of the city, which faces a significant number of social and economic challenges. The area is literally the first port of call for many legal and illegal immigrants, who often move on when they can afford it. The 40,000 inhabitants represent more than 100 different nationalities and speak 50 languages. Unemployment runs high, in particular among groups such as young migrants of North African origin (up to 75% for those aged 18-25 in that group).

The lack of recreational facilities and indoor meeting spaces adds to the feelings of frustration for local young people and produces tension over public spaces between young and old residents. The lack of social cohesion also provides a fertile breeding ground for drug abuse, crime and racism. The extreme right-wing party Vlaams Belang had its first local success in Antwerp-North in the late 1980s. Tensions and mistrust across generations and ethnic groups are part of everyday life in the area.

Buurtschatten: a compatible model of community empowerment

Antwerp-North was part of the initial group of YEPP sites that were launched in 2001. Over the years, the area has experienced a number of distinct phases of YEPP activity, driven by different actors and involving different generations of young people. In 2007, YEPP's local partner, the Evens Foundation, facilitated a complementary model of community empowerment, which later became part of the YEPP programme: the *Buurtschatten* ('neighbourhood treasures'). The idea was to tap into the existing assets of the community and mobilize residents to bring about change in their local environment themselves, rather than having outside agencies trying to provide solutions.

The integration into YEPP of this new approach, which was nevertheless compatible with YEPP's existing approach and principles, can be seen as a successful example of local ownership of the key principles of youth and community empowerment. Supported by the Evens Foundation, a community fund run and managed by residents

has been acting as Local Support Group and has initiated a number of community and youth-oriented projects: the creation of a large public venue and park in 2009, the organization of a series of summer activities attracting visitors from outside the area, language lessons given by residents to their peers, the opening of a new city library, sailing trips for youth at risk, etc.

Mainstreaming, expansion and challenges

Over the years, the *Buurtschatten* model of bottom-up decision-making has been successful enough to be mainstreamed into the municipality's neighbourhood policy. The city took on the idea of local consultation and ownership of new projects by residents, forcing the *Buurtschatten* in turn to develop new forms of empowerment to demonstrate its continued value to the community. Another sign of the success of the approach was its adoption by two other areas in Antwerp: the Linkeroever and Kiel. However, one difficulty has been to secure support from the private sector. Local businesses have shown interest and helped with logistics on an ad hoc basis, but this has not led to structural partnerships with the business community so far.





In terms of YEPP's overall goals, the focus on neighbourhood as the key level of decision-making and action took some of the emphasis away from youth participation. There are a number of competing authorities and organizations active in youth projects in Belgium and getting them to join a local structure has proved to be difficult, except in the case of specific joint projects. Two other means of promoting youth participation have been pursued: direct contact in the streets and awareness programmes in local schools. Results have been mixed in both cases, as young people are reluctant to commit to organized community work. However, successful youth participation in the two other *Buurtschatten* areas can serve as a guide to fulfilling this goal in Antwerp-North.

Transnational dimension, advocacy and exchange of best practices

Keeping a link with YEPP has, however, brought a number of rewards and positive changes to youth and community work in Antwerp-North. One great asset has been the transnational

dimension of YEPP activities, with the participation of young people in events across Europe.

This European identity has also strengthened local initiatives by raising their profile and opening new doors. This has been particularly true in terms of advocacy, with the presence and active contribution of a city official at the YEPP conference on youth participation in Genoa. An interschool project is being put in place to set up a youth parliament in the build-up to the local elections in 2012.

Another positive aspect of participation in a transnational network has been that the exchange of ideas and best practices has inspired local innovations. Pooling existing knowledge and good practice has helped local young people to adapt successful models to benefit the local community. This also applies to evaluation and participatory monitoring, a defining principle of YEPP that promotes sustainable and effective community empowerment.

Key messages

- Constant effort is required to open decision-making structures to new members so as to maintain an inclusive approach to the needs of the community.
- Cooperation with the municipality can lead to the mainstreaming of best practices into local policy.
- Transnational contacts and exchanges bring invaluable ideas and good practices that would not be developed separately.

For a full portrait of the local site and its young people, visit the section on Antwerp-North on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org

Meet Bea from Antwerp-North:

“Working with young people is based on mutual respect”



“Hello, my name is Bea. I'm 24 and I live in Antwerp-North. I was born in Rwanda and speak Swahili, French, Dutch and English. I joined YEPP through the Community Fund because I wanted to work with young people, something I feel I'm good at. For me, it's all based on mutual respect: young people respect me because I live in the neighbourhood and they can approach me easily, unlike professional social workers. I encourage them to set up their own projects and be creative! I would like to learn management skills to be able to set up my own business. I like the idea of being my own boss. I feel at home here because of the diversity, although we need more personal contacts to overcome prejudice between generations and migrant groups.”

Tuzla:

citizens drive bottom-up change in a recovering society

Area/city:

Tuzla

Country:

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Key facts & figures:

YEPP Simin Han (2001) and YEPP Gornja Tuzla (2008)

3rd largest city in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Europe's only salt lake in the city's central park

University of Tuzla hosts 16,500 students

Significant changes and challenges in a post-conflict environment

The Simin Han neighbourhood of Tuzla, where YEPP started to work in 2001, reflects the social and demographic changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the aftermath of the war. The pre-war population of 4,591 inhabitants had more than doubled by the end of the conflict, due to the migration of people displaced by the war. By the end of the war, a large number of Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) from eastern Bosnia had settled in the area. Around 25% of the population was under the age of 18, a figure that has subsequently decreased because of a high emigration rate among young adults and their families. In 2008, a second YEPP site was launched in Gornja Tuzla, a historical neighbourhood seven kilometres from the city centre with similar demographic trends.

Tuzla has had to face considerable challenges in rebuilding local society following the war, including high poverty and unemployment rates, a destroyed economic, social and cultural infrastructure, and a lack of community cohesion due to post-war migration. Many adults still suffer from war trauma, in particular single-parent families. Young people face increased violence and a high risk of alcohol and drug abuse. Combining YEPP's youth and community empowerment model with citizens' actions inspired by community organising, YEPP Simin Han and YEPP Gornja Tuzla have focused their activities on social cohesion, education, capacity-building, entrepreneurship and active citizenship.

AGORA and Tuzla Community Foundation: establishing and expanding the YEPP model

In the situation analysis carried out in 2001, local citizens identified the creation of a dedicated community space as the starting point for YEPP activities in Tuzla. The AGORA Centre opened in 2003 as a central meeting place for social and cultural exchange, information and internet access, as well as training and education. It has become a model for community initiatives in the area and the city as a whole, hosting a number of volunteer groups and organising regular activities for residents and non-residents alike. To sustain these activities and create a platform for fundraising, community stakeholders and members of the Local Support Group established the Tuzla Community Foundation (TCF) in 2003, sponsored by YEPP's local partner foundation, the Freudenberg Stiftung. Following the expansion of YEPP to the second site in Gornja Tuzla in 2008, the TCF moved its offices to the city centre to coordinate activities at the municipal level and the residents of the Simin Han neighbourhood successfully took ownership of the AGORA, forming their own independent organisation in 2010.

Since the beginning, both sites have had active Local Support Groups that bring together young people, representatives of local organisations and members of the business sector. They plan and monitor activities in their local neighbourhood in close cooperation with the TCF, which has also spread its area of operations to three new communities.

In 2010, a total of 188 Tuzla citizens were involved in organising community projects with the TCF, of whom 30% were young people under 26. Besides the regular community meetings and seminars, thematic training workshops took place in 2010 on local issues such as recycling and women's participation in elections.

Leadership Project, Youth Bank, Youth Councils and community organising

Over the years, the two YEPP sites in Tuzla have run a number of youth empowerment projects that have enabled young people to develop the skills to become agents of change in their community, with a sustainable approach adapted to the various stages of a young person's development. Children aged 9 to 14 take part in the Leadership Project, which develops their civic awareness and confidence to initiate change in their environment. As they get older, they can implement this change through projects funded by the TCF through Youth Bank, which was set up in 2004 thanks to transnational contacts and training. In 2010, young people sitting on the Tuzla Youth Bank Board awarded 18 grants, totalling € 4,800, to successful projects from 56 individual applications.

In terms of youth participation, a big step was made in 2009 with the formation of a Youth Council in each YEPP site. These have been able to influence local decision-making by meeting regularly to plan activities and have sent representatives to the local community councils.



Tuzla: citizens drive bottom-up change in a recovering society



This has inspired other areas where TCF is active to form their own Youth Clubs and participate in public life at the local level. As part of its community organising approach, the TFC also runs a Small Grant Fund for Citizens' Initiatives to help local residents improve living conditions and social cohesion in the area. The scheme has also strengthened the capacity of local groups and associations to write project proposals and develop monitoring and evaluation tools.

Cooperation between communities, a model for the region

Besides the successful independence of the AGORA centre, another success story of YEPP in Tuzla has been the high level of cooperation between the two sites. It has brought benefits to both communities and their young people, in particular through joint Youth Council meetings and projects. On the one hand, Gornja Tuzla has benefited from the infrastructure and organisational know-how of Simin Han, derived from the AGORA centre and its acquisition. On the other hand, young people from Simin Han have been impressed and inspired by the energy

and enthusiasm of their peers from Gornja Tuzla. Furthermore, this local cooperation has greatly benefited from, and contributed to, YEPP's transnational activities, with delegates taking part in a number of workshops and community conferences on issues such as entrepreneurship, advocacy, youth participation and the Youth Bank.

With new areas of the city looking to replicate successful programmes, there seems to be a promising future for the YEPP model in Tuzla. After decades of top-down bureaucracy followed by a destructive conflict, the citizens of Tuzla are regaining a sense of ownership of their community. Building on a public discussion with the municipality in the AGORA premises in 2009, Local Support Group members went on to suggest an amendment to municipal statutes to allow non-party candidates to run for local office. Regional media and politicians took note of this unique citizens' initiative, which highlighted the democratic potential of modern Bosnian society.

Key messages

- Bottom-up mobilisation of young people and citizens is particularly effective for empowering communities in post-conflict environments.
- Young people can participate actively in creating sustainable change only if opportunities for civic and community engagement are open to them, and constant training provided.
- Community initiatives launched and managed by local residents ensure ownership, responsibility and the empowerment of community actors.
- Youth empowerment and community development are long-term processes that require constant new inputs, good supporting structures and determination to bring about the change.

For a full portrait of the local site and its young people, visit the section on Tuzla on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org

Meet Emina from Tuzla:

"Something just clicked inside me"



"Hello, my name is Emina. I'm 20 and studying pharmacy at university. I first got involved in YEPP by becoming a Tuzla Youth Bank Board member in 2007. I then had the chance to become a coach in the Leadership Project and have been so for the past three years. Living in Simin Han but going to school in another area, I often saw the local kids but had never talked to them. Now, these children from the community I didn't feel I could ever belong to are participating with me in the project. And something just clicked inside me, being in the position to become a youth leader, to influence others in a positive way and show them a system of values that is very different from the one they are used to in our society. I am now a part of the environment that basically forms these kids, and a person that shapes their opinion, in a way. I also became a member of Simin Han's Youth Council and actively participated at Simin Han Local Support Group meetings as a youth representative."

Kristinestad: structural change through youth participation in decision-making



Area/city:

Kristinestad

Country:

Finland

Key facts & figures:

7,156 inhabitants
Sparsely populated area of 10.5km²

57% Swedish speakers,
42% Finnish speakers
12.4% of residents
under 14, 24.7% over 65

Cultural diversity in an ageing town

Kristinestad in Finland was founded by farmers and merchants in the 17th century and soon became a major hub for trade across the Bothnian gulf with Sweden. This has shaped the area's cultural landscape, making the town truly bicultural with a majority of Swedish speakers. The educational system reflects this balance, with both linguistic groups having their own separate schools and universities.

Kristinestad is also an ageing town with a quarter of its population over 65. One of the reasons for this demographic trend is the outward migration of young people seeking higher education and work opportunities in other parts of the country. More recently, a number of asylum-seekers and foreign migrants have come the other way to live and work in Kristinestad.

YEPP, a new dimension for existing youth initiatives

Prior to the creation of YEPP, a number of youth structures were already active in and around Kristinestad, a good example of the long Finnish tradition of youth empowerment and participation in their communities. With the support of the Municipal Youth Office and the Svenska Kulturfonden (Foundation for Swedish Culture in Finland), YEPP was launched in 2001 to act as a catalyst for these existing initiatives, in particular the recently established Youth Council.

Based on a wide consultation of public and private stakeholders, a first operational plan was developed which laid the foundations for a long-term approach to youth empowerment. Beyond the core relationship between the municipality and the Youth Council, a number of partner organisations have been involved in YEPP activities over the years including the local Red Cross and a parents' association from a village school. Thanks to an intergenerational partnership of young people and adults, YEPP's Concept of Change and its emphasis on working through a Local Support Group have helped develop and structure youth activities in Kristinestad.

Little Parliament, Youth Channel, Culture Café and summer jobs

Over its ten years' of activity, YEPP Kristinestad has initiated a wide range of innovative projects with young people. A number of these projects have been so successful that they have turned into permanent youth structures. This is the case with the Little Parliament and Youth Parliament, launched in 2004 and 2008 respectively to give children and young people an active voice in local democratic life. Another structure for youth empowerment was inspired by an EmpowerMediaNetwork (EMN) workshop in Turin in 2005, as young participants returned to set up a Youth Channel in partnership with a local TV station. This has enabled them to produce and broadcast their own youth programmes, strengthening their sense of identity and developing new skills through a series of workshops.

Other important initiatives have included the Culture Café, a project aimed at creating a more active cultural scene with young people of all backgrounds through regular concerts. The original aim was to develop contacts between the two main linguistic groups, with young asylum-seekers joining the project over time. As part of this intercultural dialogue, a bilingual youth newspaper was published twice a year from 2002 to 2008. Furthermore, in 2009 the Local Support Group implemented a new initiative for local young people to find work experience in Kristinestad by granting summer-job cheques with a value of 160. A total of 49 young people managed to find host companies and organizations for their work placements, a success that led to the continuation of the programme in 2010 and 2011.



Successful youth participation and challenges for the future

The long-term structural approach to youth empowerment, together with the Local Support Group's ability to draw on a wide range of partners has made Kristinestad a model programme site for YEPP in many ways. A number of key active young people have developed a culture of youth participation and advocacy on youth issues with the municipality. The Youth Council has become a consultative body to the Municipal Council, to which one of its members was elected in 2008. This creates a greater sense of citizenship and community involvement. In addition, young people's participation in transnational workshops and conferences has enabled them to share their good practices with peers from other countries and learn about other types of challenges. But important challenges remain. The programme needs more involvement from a wider section of young people. Its activities have so far attracted an overwhelming majority of young Swedish-speakers, particularly girls.

The participation of more Finnish speakers, boys and asylum-seekers would increase the impact of the activities and help shape the town's cohesion in the future. Building on the achievements of YEPP in Kristinestad will also require further fundraising efforts, following years of reduced funding from the original partner foundations.

Key messages

- Municipalities can gain expertise and public support by consulting young people.
- Long-term commitment of local actors and partners yields structural results.
- Successful youth initiatives can be turned into permanent structures.

For a full portrait of the local site and its young people, visit the section on Kristinestad on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org



Meet Anna-Kajsa and Antonia from Kristinestad: "leading the change"



Anna-Kajsa and Antonia were both born in Kristinestad. Both are 22 years old and have been involved with YEPP as members and chairs of the Youth Council since 2004. Anna-Kajsa says she has "learnt new things with the Youth Council every day, everything from politics to organising events". She is now studying in Vasa, 100 kilometres north of Kristinestad, but takes part in summer activities and monitors youth participation in local politics, even considering standing as a candidate in the 2012 municipal elections. She wants to promote social change in her hometown and push "the politicians to involve the Youth Council even more when they make decisions that concern young people". Antonia is back in Kristinestad during a break in her studies and sees her involvement in local and transnational YEPP activities as an important part of her personal development. Chairing the Youth Council and being producer at the Youth Channel have helped her reconnect and identify with her hometown. Now she wants to "see changes in vocational training and employment opportunities for young people in her community", as well as "increase cooperation between Swedish and Finnish schools in the area".



Kimito Island: activating the local community to attract more young people



Area/city:

Kimito Island

Country:

Finland

Key facts & figures:

7,198 inhabitants
Largest coastal island of Finland

Total area of 2,801 km²
(of which 2,114 km² is water)
70% Swedish speakers,
30% Finnish speakers



Overcoming geographical and linguistic barriers

Kimito Island covers a large area of diverse landscapes along the south-western coast of Finland. However, Swedish speakers form a majority of the population, a reflection of the region's history. Relations with the minority Finnish speakers are often hindered by prejudice, as young people in particular find it difficult to engage with their peers from a different linguistic background.

The geographical composition of the area, which includes Finland's largest coastal island, provides further challenges in terms of mobility and opportunities. Long distances and the difficulty of providing public transport to isolated parts make living and working on Kimito Island difficult for young people. A significant number of them move from the island to bigger communities in search of higher education and work opportunities.

A sustainable model for transnational activities and local participation

In 2006, five years after the creation of YEPP and its first Finnish site in Kristinestad, the Department of Youth and Sports of the municipality of Kimito Island expressed interest in adopting the YEPP approach to youth and community empowerment. Contacts with Kristinestad and the YEPP Programme Team were developed, with local teachers and young people particularly keen on joining the European platform. For the municipality, YEPP offered a sustainable and structured model for young people to engage in transnational activities and develop further local participation. The YEPP approach was presented to, and endorsed by, representatives of the local Youth Parliament.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in the autumn of 2007, marking the official start of YEPP Kimito Island as a local site. YEPP activities were integrated into the work plan of the municipality's Department of Youth and Sports. This ensured the necessary human and financial resources for coordination and evaluation, as well as logistical support for

young people's activities in YEPP. To give the new local site a solid methodological framework, the Local Coordinator and Evaluation Facilitator took part in a transnational YEPP evaluation workshop in Turin in October 2008. When subsequently the original Evaluation Facilitator left and a new one was appointed, this was followed by further training on the YEPP evaluation design by the Programme Team in June 2010.

A first Cycle of Change to promote life and work on the island

Building on the commitment of the municipality and transnational training of the local team, a Local Support Group of young people and adults was set up in early 2009 to discuss and survey the needs of the local community. A six-month situation analysis revealed three main challenges on the island: lack of opportunities for young people after high school, geographical isolation due to transport constraints and prejudices between the two linguistic groups.

Based on this analysis, the Local Support Group designed a first Operational Plan in 2010 for activities to be carried out in 2011. The idea was to initiate three projects adapted to the needs and expectations of young people in different age groups, in close cooperation with the schools. The first project, involving children in the 6th grade aims to promote the island's natural resources through outdoor activities under the title "Forest Adventure". A second project, which brings together pupils in the 8th grade, is dedicated to discussing what it is like to work and live on the archipelago. The third and final project, with first-year high school students, organises visits to young entrepreneurs.



By raising awareness of the resources and opportunities available on the island, the ultimate goal is to encourage young people to move back after their studies and be part of an active local community.

Increased youth participation, partnership and intercultural challenges

The initial evaluation and planning phase involved a growing number of young people through the Local Support Group, with 20 to 30 volunteers taking part in the establishment of YEPP on the island. With the operational phase under way in 2011, it is hoped that around 260 young people will participate in the various activities. A key incentive for local engagement has been the opportunity to take part in transnational YEPP events, which have involved seven young people from the island since 2008. The positive feedback from these youth exchanges has inspired participants to recruit more peers and initiate new projects in



their community, for example to develop skills acquired at EmpowerMediaNetwork media workshops.

Another successful development has been increased intergenerational and cross-sectoral cooperation through the Local Support Group, building a concrete and rewarding partnership between young people, local officials and the community. Mixed thematic groups have been created to plan and organise the various projects. Looking beyond 2011, an area identified for improvement is intercultural dialogue between linguistic communities. Joint activities and events must be organised to provide channels for Finnish and Swedish speakers to meet and exchange ideas and experiences. The comprehensive situation analysis, which highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of local community life, was an important first step in recognising the linguistic barrier.

Key messages

- YEPP's Cycle of Change is a flexible tool that can be used for local planning and evaluation in policy areas beyond youth policy.
- Participation and impact are greater when the initial project ideas come from the Local Support Group and the young people themselves.

For a full portrait of the local site and its young people, visit the section on Kimito Island on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org

Meet Hanna from Kimito Island:

“Make things happen for you!”

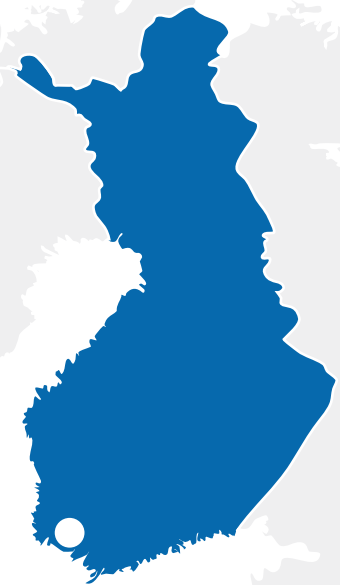


“Hello, my name is Hanna, I’m 18 and was born on Kimito Island. I am bilingual in Finnish and Swedish and currently studying while living with my family in the city centre. I was already involved in the local Youth Parliament and got instantly interested in the international dimension of YEPP. I’ve had the chance to take part in several transnational events in Ireland and Italy, sharing and developing my passion for youth participation and media projects. My English has improved a lot and I can now communicate confidently with a wide range of people. YEPP has also made me discover more people from the island, both young people and adults. I think young people should be active and ready to take small risks to make things happen for them instead of complaining about problems. Regarding opportunities on the island, more diverse employment sectors would help keep young people here. But YEPP has also made me realise that there are greater disadvantages for young people in other parts of Europe.”



Väståboland:

connecting the dots on the archipelago and beyond



Area/city:

Väståboland

Country:

Finland

Key facts & figures:

15,484 inhabitants
17.2% aged under 15

Total area of 5,500 km²
(of which 80% is water)
Includes most of the Turku Archipelago's 20,000 islands



Open landscapes and perspectives in a unique natural environment

The archipelago municipality of Väståboland was created in January 2009 as the result of the merger of five smaller municipalities. Located in southwest Finland, it covers a major part of the Turku Archipelago, a web of 20,000 islands and islets that is considered a natural wonder. Ferry routes and bridges connect the main islands. The sea and preserved green wilderness create a unique and diverse range of landscapes.

This natural heritage is at the heart of the local identity and approach to community development. Distance and relative geographical isolation are part of everyday life: people feel it is their responsibility to make things happen. Together with the municipality, they are committed to organising events and activities that bring the community together. A key concern is the provision of public services and activities to all parts of the municipality. Young people also want to learn more about the potential opportunities available after high school, such as university courses and first steps in the labour market.

Another challenge for the local community is to involve both linguistic groups: the majority Swedish speakers and minority Finnish speakers. Finnish-speaking young people have to overcome the feeling of being left out when it comes to community initiatives. This can be achieved by their taking a more active role in the bilingual planning and implementation of YEPP activities.

From consultation to implementation

YEPP Väståboland was launched in April 2009 with the creation of a Local Support Group of 21 residents, including young people, teachers, politicians, social workers, NGO and youth workers. A wide consultation of local residents revealed the challenges of holding regular meetings and sharing results among such a diverse and dispersed group. A decision was made in early 2010 to form a core group of six people from around Pargas, the administrative centre of the municipality, to ensure continuity and drive the process. Important links were also established and strengthened with the local youth councils in the municipality's five districts.

YEPP's Cycle of Change provided a solid framework for planning and implementation. Reporting – keeping a record of youth activities and their impact – is still an issue for the local team, as the group often gives priority to finding new ideas and putting them into practice with the local partners. A key partner has been the local administration, which provides constant support and is open to new initiatives.

Entrepreneurship, mainland excursions and sports infrastructure

The YEPP Local Coordinator in Väståboland is also responsible for the municipality's five youth councils. This has created a successful model of joint analysis, planning and evaluation between the young people and adults involved, with most activities then carried out by the youth councils. In the main town of Pargas, local young people addressed the lack of job opportunities in the summer by setting up their own ice cream stand in the town's main park. They succeeded in turning a profit while developing organisational and management skills.

In the smaller village of Iniö (250 inhabitants), consultation with the 17 students registered in the local school led to the organisation of group excursions to Turku, on the mainland, for activities including bowling and climbing. In the village of Houtskär, the issue identified as a priority by the local community was the lack of a public meeting place.



The youth council came up with the idea of building a beach volleyball court. Tasks and responsibilities, from ordering materials to carrying out the actual work, were shared among young people and residents. The new court was successfully opened in June 2009. Evaluation has demonstrated its wide use and appreciation by the community.

Youth Board and international exchanges, avenues for the future

In order to broaden activities and create new opportunities for young people, the five youth councils in Väståboland are represented at the municipal level in a Youth Board. These representatives are active in local advocacy work and continually work on strengthening contacts and cooperation with the city council. The Youth Board is also responsible for external cooperation and international exchanges, which open new horizons to young people.

An example of external cooperation through YEPP is the joint “Attitudes Project” organised with neighbouring YEPP site Kimito Island. Through a series of school workshops and discussions, young people reflect on the issues of language and respect in social interaction, in particular in bilingual and multicultural environments. Further afield, a delegation of young people from Väståboland took part in the YEPP Community Conference and Youth Meeting in Genoa in October 2010, presenting the activities and local characteristics of YEPP Väståboland and exchanging ideas on youth participation with their peers.

Key messages

- Young people know best what local young people need; local partners and the municipality should support them in making a difference.
- Developing an overall theme every year at a transnational level would facilitate contacts and exchanges across countries on common issues.

For a full portrait of the local site and its young people, visit the section on Väståboland on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org

Meet Felicia from Väståboland: “We are the future”



“Hello, my name is Felicia. I’m 17 and was born and raised on the small island of Houtskär in Väståboland. I had to leave home for my studies and moved to Turku, on the mainland, where I live in a small flat. I’m a Swedish-speaking Finnish citizen and I spend most weekends and holidays back home in Houtskär. Challenges occur anywhere in the world, but in small towns you mainly have to be stubborn and remind people that you actually have the same rights as everyone else. In 2009, I heard about the creation of youth councils in each district of the recently formed municipality. I had always been interested in political events and decided to run for a position at the local level. I was also very enthusiastic about joining the YEPP Local Support Group and participating in transnational exchanges. It helps us appreciate how good things can be here compared to other countries, and develop political awareness. I believe that decision-makers and politicians must understand that we are the future and that our ideas are not always stupid.”



GörlitzZgorzelec: building new bridges in a cross-border community

Area/city:

twin towns of Görlitz/Zgorzelec

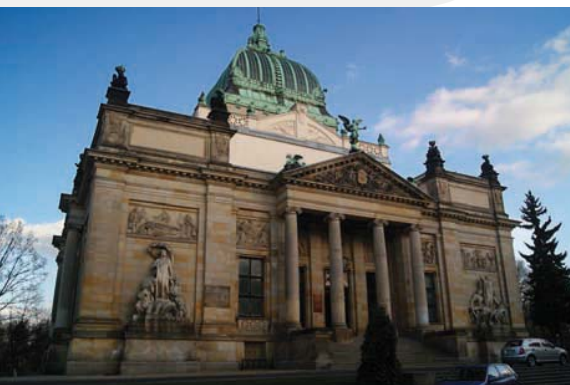
Country:

Germany/Poland

Key facts & figures:

55,596 inhabitants in Görlitz;
31,684 in Zgorzelec

City split by new border in 1945
Bridges link Germany and Poland
over the Neißة river



Border towns as a symbol of European history

Görlitz and Zgorzelec are two towns across the German-Polish border with common origins and history, leading to a model vision of cross-border cooperation. Before the Neißة river became the new border between Germany and Poland in 1945, both sides formed one single city in the former German province of Silesia. Following decades of communism after the war, the two towns signed a partnership agreement in 1991 and proclaimed themselves Europastadt ("Europe-town") Zgorzelec-Görlitz in 1998. Görlitz is home to the historical city centre but has experienced a decline in population and industrial activity over the past decades. Zgorzelec on the other hand has grown from an underdeveloped suburb into an active border town, with mining sites and a power plant providing employment for the local workforce. This has helped develop housing, sports and shopping facilities that have improved living standards for residents.

Today the two towns face similar challenges and increasingly cooperate on a number of issues including city planning, environmental protection, culture, sports, education and policing. However, economic difficulties on both sides mean that young people experience a lack of employment perspectives. The two towns therefore have high emigration rates of graduates and skilled workers. This creates a sense of apathy among local youths, with conservative educational institutions unable to channel their energy into constructive activities for the community. As a result social tensions and exclusion create additional distance on the ground between the two national groups, making cross-border contacts at community level difficult. This also reflects the feeling by inhabitants of Zgorzelec that cross-border plans are made mainly in Görlitz and presented as "finished products" to the Polish neighbours.

YEPP, an effective model for cross-border partnership

Given this unique cross-border environment, there was an obvious case for the creation of a YEPP local site in Görlitz-Zgorzelec.

For local youth and community organisations, joining YEPP was an opportunity to develop their bi-national activities in a wider European network. By learning from other countries and sharing their experience, both sides have extended their vision beyond internal tensions and realised the potential of cross-border cooperation for young people and their communities. Besides increased visibility, YEPP has provided technical assistance, institutional weight, evaluation tools and new funding opportunities to move from cross-border competition to cooperation. For YEPP, having a local site in GörlitzZgorzelec has been a significant addition of a unique cross-border environment, an opportunity to develop its model of partnership at both local and European levels. Thanks to the support of the Robert Bosch foundation, the "GörlitzZgorzelec Project Office of the German-Polish Dialogue" was created in April 2009, operating under the auspices of "nasze miasto – unsere stadt" Zgorzelec and "ideenfluß e.V." in Görlitz.

While there was a number of existing youth and community organisations in both towns, as well as a degree of cross-border cooperation, YEPP's Concept of Change brought some innovations that challenged traditional practices. Local partners met the idea of self-initiated and self-organised youth work with some perplexity, as they had never conceived youth

empowerment in these terms. Different funding structures in the two countries posed another challenge to the local YEPP team, with the uncertain financial perspectives for youth projects in Görlitz a particular cause for concern. Finally, the consultation process of the situation analysis was a new concept for most local organisations, who were used to conceiving projects together with institutional partners before looking for interest and feedback from the community.

Developing cultural activities and Youth Parliaments

The situation analysis carried out by young people and local stakeholders identified the most pressing needs to be met in order to empower local youths. In Zgorzelec, young people insisted on the lack of cycling lanes, indoor meeting spaces and sports and entertainment facilities in the town. The young people of Görlitz were more concerned with the difficulties in finding work placements and the absence of dialogue with local officials. Both groups of young people believed that further efforts should be put into cross-border youth exchanges and cooperation. As a result of this analysis, they developed together with the local YEPP team a shared homepage to promote youth activities in both cities. Young people also ran auctions and presentations on extra-curricular activities at various events, including the *Dni Zgorzelca 2011* ("Zgorzelec Days") Festival held in the historical Dom Kultury palace and park. The building has also been granted by the municipality to host weekly meetings in Zgorzelec.

GörlitzZgorzelec: building new bridges in a cross-border community



Regarding youth participation, YEPP partners were able to draw on existing initiatives to promote the active citizenship of young people in both towns. In Görlitz, a Youth Parliament was already active by the time YEPP entered the area. Youth delegates took part in separate transnational events organised by the International Youth Parliament in Sweden in 2009 and Canterbury in June 2011. This inspired the local coordinator and partners in Zgorzelec to initiate their own Youth Parliament, in collaboration with local high schools. Thanks to YEPP contacts in Slovakia, two students from the Kecerovce-Olšava local site obtained an Erasmus internship grant to participate in the foundation of the Zgorzelec Youth Parliament. Paradoxically, the emergence of a group of youth delegates in Zgorzelec has coincided with a disruption in the funding and leadership of the Youth Parliament in Görlitz. The hope for the future is that both bodies can support each other's development and design common strategies for cross-border youth participation on issues that are relevant to both communities.

Innovative community development gathers public support

After only two years of activities, YEPP GörlitzZgorzelec has already had a profound impact on cross-border cooperation and youth participation in both towns. The involvement of the municipality has been particularly impressive on the Polish side, as the mayor and his spokeswoman were instrumental in the creation of the Youth Parliament in Zgorzelec. A successful partnership has also been developed with the German-Polish Youth Work (DPJW) organisation and the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation, which funded part of the situation analysis.

Over time, the growing interest in the YEPP approach has allowed the local team to gain influence and take part in expert meetings on both sides. One of the key achievements of YEPP has been to be perceived as a binder rather than as a new competitor in the field. To underline the importance of GörlitzZgorzelec for the future development of YEPP, the 5th YEPP Community Conference and Youth Meeting was held in both towns in November 2011, celebrating the 10 years of YEPP. Looking ahead, the local young people and partners want to use this momentum to launch a cross-border Youth Parliament in cooperation with a Czech partner. The objective is to promote joint advocacy and training of youth workers from both sides. Mainstreaming the needs and aspirations of young people into local policy-making is a long-term process that has been successfully initiated but will require sustained efforts from all partners to achieve lasting results.

Key messages

- It takes time and open dialogue to implement new concepts and ideas that challenge traditional community work in an area.
- YEPP's model of cross-sectoral partnership can effectively build trust across border communities and create fruitful cooperation.

For a full portrait of the local site and its young people, visit the section on GörlitzZgorzelec on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org



Dublin:

integrating community services in a disadvantaged inner city

Area/city:

North East Inner City, Dublin

Country:

Ireland

Key facts & figures:

10 electoral districts,
including the North Docks

33,823 inhabitants as of 2006

ICON network launched in 1993

Inner city challenges and community responses

Dublin's North East Inner City has a long history of social and economic disadvantage, with some of the highest levels of deprivation in the city. To address these challenges, the area has historically benefited from a high level of community development, involving both local organisations and public authorities. The dense fabric of community and voluntary organisations is structured into the Inner City Organisations Network (ICON), which represents 65 local organisations.

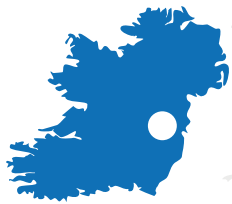
Over the last 20 years, the area has experienced significant changes with the arrival of immigrant communities and the development of private home ownership, exposing communities to the recent difficulties in the housing market. To better engage with one of the area's most vulnerable groups, young people at risk, ICON highlighted the need for improved coordination between state and voluntary services. This led to the creation in 2000 of YPAR (Young People At Risk Initiative), comprising both governmental and non-governmental organisations working on similar issues with the same individuals. The aim was to integrate the various services to avoid overlaps and increase the effectiveness and impact of youth and community empowerment.

YPAR and YEPP: a challenging and formative alliance

The first three years of YPAR helped establish close cooperation between public agencies and non-governmental organisations. The success of this innovative approach to youth empowerment led to the integration of the programme into the national Local Child Protection Committee in 2003, with the creation of a steering committee under the leadership of local organisations. Support and funding came from the Irish Youth Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, both of which had participated in the creation of YEPP in 2001. Seeing an opportunity for mutual growth, the North East Inner City became a YEPP Local Programme Site in 2004 with YPAR acting as local partner. Joining YEPP was seen as an opportunity to become part of a transnational network, exchange experiences with like-minded people across Europe, and give local young people a chance to travel and broaden their horizons.

For YEPP, it provided a unique environment for expansion and implementation of its concept of youth empowerment in disadvantaged areas. There was much to learn from YPAR's innovative local practices to add expertise to the expanding YEPP model.

At the same time, it has been a constant challenge over the years to combine YPAR's focus on effective interagency cooperation with YEPP's emphasis on youth participation in more organic and non-formal structures. These different yet compatible approaches have generated dynamic tensions that have influenced the history and development of both programmes. For YPAR, being part of YEPP has helped strengthen the participation of young people in efforts to integrate and improve community services. This formative alliance was made possible by the vision and commitment of two foundations involved in both YEPP and YPAR: the Irish Youth Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.





Innovative integration, youth participation and reaching out to Europe

To improve and integrate the various services for young people at risk in the area, YPAR developed a number of innovative instruments including thematic working groups and an interagency protocol. The protocol, launched in 2010 by the Irish Minister for Children, is a key step in interagency cooperation: any agency can now seek the assistance of another agency to support a child, young person or family by calling a case meeting.

An individual care plan is then agreed and implemented by the various actors involved, ensuring that information is shared and action coordinated between agencies. The protocol creates formal links between school, family and community services to address risks in a systematic and effective way. Young people are at the heart of the process, an aspect that YPAR has focused on as part of efforts to increase



youth participation in the community. Over the years, YPAR has developed a number of community projects with young people. Following Youth Bank training by YEPP, the North East Inner City Youth Bank was established by a committee of eight young people. They have awarded grants to projects such as the development of a youth garden, a local youth leadership programme and a series of development awareness workshops based on a field trip to Zambia. YPAR's Foreign National Working Group, which meets every month, has supported a number of actions by up to 150 foreign national young people in the area, including the publication of a drugs awareness leaflet in seven different languages. These young people have also had a chance to hold a meeting with Garda, the local police, to tackle racist bullying in the area.

YEPP transnational workshops and events have provided further opportunities for youth empowerment in the North East Inner City, with the enthusiastic participation of youngsters. Exchanging with young people and youth workers from across Europe has opened new perspectives, in particular at the advocacy and Youth Bank training sessions. Dublin was also the host for the 3rd YEPP community conference and youth meeting in 2008, where young people from seven European countries gathered to share experiences and get their voices heard. The views expressed in that forum were consolidated into policy messages at the 4th YEPP conference and youth meeting in Genoa in 2010, in which young people from Dublin also took part.

Meet Michael from Dublin:

“YEPP has made me more open to foreign nationals in our own communities”



“My name is Michael Malone. I’m 25 and I was born in Dublin. I got involved in YEPP in 2004 as part of a youth project looking for international contacts. I’ve had the chance to attend YEPP workshops and events in Italy, Belgium, Finland and Poland. Today, I’m coordinator for the North East Inner City Youth Bank while studying Youth and Community Work at Maynooth University. Our neighbourhood has a large population of young people with high levels of teenage pregnancy, unemployment, early school leaving, and drug and alcohol abuse, and a bad reputation with society and the police. But there’s also a strong community spirit, like street parties during the recent snow. I feel I belong in the neighbourhood as a lot of people would know me through my voluntary work. With YEPP, I’ve made friends in different countries and become more aware of racism. This has made me more open to foreign nationals in our own communities. I’d like to see more schemes for young people who are unemployed to develop life skills instead of just getting the dole and more peer leadership training so that young people can give back to the community.”

Key messages

- Public and private community services can be integrated with a focus on individual cases
- Cooperation with law enforcement authorities is key to community empowerment in deprived areas
- Engaging regularly in transnational events raises young people’s awareness of racism and stimulates intercultural dialogue

For a full portrait of the local site and its young people, visit the section on Dublin on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org

Albenga:

celebrating cultural diversity and learning from peers

Area/city:

Albenga

Country:

Italy

Key facts & figures:

24,378 inhabitants
Preserved historical centre

7.65% of foreign nationals

Main non-Italian groups:
Moroccan, Albanian and Romanian

Tourism and immigration in the “city of a hundred towers”

Albenga is a city on the Ligurian coast, halfway between the French border and Genoa. It has a uniquely preserved historical centre of Roman and medieval towers and churches, earning it a place on the list of Italy’s “cities of a hundred towers”. Thanks to this architectural wealth, Albenga attracts a large number of visitors, particularly in the summer. The second most important sector for the local economy after tourism is agriculture, as some of the few flat agricultural lands in the region are located around the city.

The city is also home to large migrant communities, who represent a growing share of the local population and often do seasonal agricultural jobs. The main non-Italian groups are Moroccan, Albanian and Romanian. A large number of them live in disadvantaged conditions, and relations between them and the Italian community are often marked by prejudice and intolerance. For the young people particularly, this has resulted in lack of integration and social cohesion, which has bred widespread mistrust of public institutions. This is also true for young people from all backgrounds, who have expressed frustration at the lack of public spaces and job opportunities.

Local associations, the municipality and young people come together

Under the impulse of the municipality and Compagnia di San Paolo, YEPP Albenga was launched in 2007 to open new perspectives for young people and allow them to become active members of their multicultural community. Convinced by this new approach to youth empowerment, the municipality provided funding for the positions of Local Coordinator and Evaluation Facilitator. These two formed a Local Support Group that brought together representatives of local associations, sports organisations, schools and a social cooperative. Young people were invited to get involved and contribute to the planning and implementation of activities.

The Local Support Group of YEPP Albenga has gone through significant changes over the years, with a number of young people moving on to study at university in Genoa, to be replaced by the next generation. Those founding members who stayed in Albenga have grown into their new responsibilities and developed a wide range of skills through their involvement in YEPP. In total, the group has implemented three Operational Plans and gone through three Cycles of Change, with participatory evaluation carried out at the end of each cycle to identify areas of improvement for the future.

Promoting local diversity, music and identity

YEPP Albenga has organised cultural activities that bring young people from different nationalities together to develop their organisational and entrepreneurial skills. One of the highlights has been the annual *Contagi* festival, which began in 2008 (previously known as *Musica Migrante*). The festival consists of a series of concerts and workshops to develop dialogue between different cultures and present different musical traditions. In 2009, the line-up featured musicians from Greece, Southern Italy, Eastern Europe, Morocco and Latin America, with an average of 300 people attending each concert.

Highlighting the positive impact of the festival, the 2010 event was awarded a YEPP Transnational Youth Bank grant. The audience included fellow YEPP youngsters from partner sites in Ireland, Finland, Poland and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A number of young people from Albenga also participated in an EmpowerMediaNetwork (EMN) project called “Let’s talk about us”.





This video project gave a voice to young people and demonstrated their commitment to shaping the future of their community. Another YEPP Albenga project was the creation of a “School for Youngsters” to provide Italian classes to foreign students. In 2009, a number of students of Moroccan origin were able to improve their understanding and expression skills in the language of their host country, thus strengthening their involvement in the wider community. Furthermore, the YEPP group set up an “Intercultural Shelf” to exchange books in the languages of local residents and visitors.

members of their community, improving inter-generational awareness and respect in the process. The long-term and sustainable approach to youth involvement means that young people have grown within the YEPP framework, taking on new responsibilities and acting as coaches for their younger peers. There are currently 10 local young people involved in the Local Support Group, and overall more than 100 young people have participated in the various activities.

In terms of advocacy, a number of actions launched by the group have been successful and contributed to closer cooperation with the municipality. The high level of participation of young people in planning and implementing activities has had a strong impact on the perception of decision-makers. Moving beyond official support to extend the partnership to other associations, local businesses and local residents has proved more challenging. There is still untapped potential when it comes to community empowerment through the involvement of a wider range of stakeholders.



Broader partnership for enhanced community empowerment

Over its four years of activity, YEPP Albenga has significantly strengthened the local cultural scene and changed the way different national groups see each other, even if they do not actively cooperate. It has also enabled young people to develop new skills and become active

Meet Francesca and Simone from Albenga:
“A rare opportunity for young people in this country”



Key messages

- Young people can draw valuable skills from their volunteering and community work and turn them into successful assets for the labour market.
- Keeping an active core of young people involved over several years allows the more experienced ones to develop coaching skills and train younger peers.
- Politicians and decision-makers are keen to give visibility and support to youth projects with high levels of participation by young people.

For a full portrait of the local site and its young people, visit the section on Albenga on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org

“Hello, my name is Francesca, I’m 24 and enjoy living in my hometown of Albenga. I came to YEPP in 2007 and was immediately keen to be part of this new world of opportunities for young people. While studying tourism and cultural organisation, I was able to manage the EMN project “Let’s talk about us”. There, I developed my coordination, management and organisational skills, which I have been able to use professionally in a cultural agency I founded with a fellow member of the Local Support Group.”

“Hello, my name is Simone and I’m 21. I play various musical instruments, which brought me to YEPP via the Musica Migrante festival. Over the years, my role in the festival grew from musician to planning and coordination. This is a rare opportunity for young people here in Italy, where we usually only execute plans designed by adults. Together with working on leaflets for YEPP activities, the festival has given a great boost to my confidence in my capacities to add value to my community and find a rewarding career.”



Genoa-Cornigliano: modern identity and social cohesion in a post-industrial area

Area/city:

Cornigliano, Genoa

Country:

Italy

Key facts & figures:

15,294 inhabitants

Major steel factory closed in 2005

Unemployment rate of 11.42%

**46.2% of immigrants come from
Latin America**

Urban regeneration at a multicultural crossroads

Cornigliano is a post-industrial area in western Genoa, located along the coastline between the harbour and the airport. The recently closed steel factories that dominate its landscape played a significant role in the industrial development of the city during the 20th century. Successive waves of immigrants were drawn to the area to work in the factories, starting with southern Italians in the 1960s. In recent years, a large number of Ecuadorian families have settled in Cornigliano and rejuvenated the area, together with other foreign nationals: a third of residents under the age of 18 are foreigners.

Relations between the newcomers and older immigrants from the south of Italy are difficult to establish and have given rise to some tensions, while the closure of the giant steel factory has had a mixed impact on Cornigliano. On the one hand, industrial pollution and toxic emissions have significantly decreased, and regeneration plans are under way to turn former industrial spaces into cultural and social meeting places for the community. On the other hand, fewer work opportunities are available to young people in Cornigliano, which has a high unemployment rate and the lowest proportion of university graduates in Genoa (only 3.5%, as opposed to 10.9% for the city as a whole).

YEPP, a good match for a civil society in transition

It was in this context of deep social and economic transformation that the municipality expressed interest in implementing the YEPP approach with local young people and existing organizations in Cornigliano, with the support of the City of Genoa and Compagnia di San Paolo. Both the municipality and local civil society groups contributed time and resources to set up the first Local Support Group in 2007 and analyse the needs of young people and the community. Of the initial 15 participating associations, 13 are still active in the project while 10 young people are permanent members of the Local Support Group.

The problems that were immediately identified by the group include the degradation of public spaces, the lack of intercultural dialogue, the isolation of young people and the lack of work opportunities. Pooling the expertise and enthusiasm of different community actors allowed YEPP to plan and implement joint initiatives on a scale which matched that of the issues at hand. The industrial past of the area had left it with a strong culture of working class solidarity embodied in associations such as social cooperatives and religious organisations. YEPP provided these traditional structures with a new model and purpose and helped them make a transition to the post-industrial era, allowing them to maintain strong links with a more diverse and fragmented community.

Promoting local stories and improving access to jobs

The Local Support Group in Cornigliano started its operational phase in 2008 with a focus on three priority areas: spaces, identity and culture. The first project was the establishment of a 'creativity desk' to attract young people and organize a number of thematic labs on modern forms of artistic expression (music, dance, street art, etc.). A wider community project was then launched under the name 'Cornigliano Mon Amour... nel Tempo' (Cornigliano My Love... a History) to collect the memories and stories of the area's inhabitants and capture them in a multimedia gallery, which was then displayed in a popular location. This allowed members of the community to share their visions of Cornigliano over the years and create a sense of belonging and social cohesion at a time of significant change.





Building on this successful initiative and the video workshops organized by the EmpowerMediaNetwork, young people continued to work on the 'Tank TV' video project and took part in weekly theatre and photo activities in the 'YEPP Village'. Their contribution was rewarded with the presentation of their video on Cornigliano at an international film competition in Holland. In terms of gaining access to the labour market, YEPP Cornigliano set up a peer-to-peer 'Job Club' helpdesk with a weekly open training session. To further help young people with their first steps into the labour market, the Job Club also compiled a map of employment services, entrepreneurial resources and business contacts in the area.



Sustaining change and looking ahead

The YEPP team in Cornigliano considers that sustainable youth and community empowerment will require more time, favourable circumstances and close relationships with key figures in the

community. The hope is that the current process will yield significant results in years to come. For now, young people have been able to measure the challenges and the efforts required to create change in their communities. The successful organisation of the 4th YEPP conference and youth meeting in October 2010, with 120 participants from eight countries, generated considerable enthusiasm and a greater sense of ownership of the local projects.

The regular cultural activities have also allowed young people to breathe new life into parts of the area that had been neglected. One of the highlights was a 2009 event with live performances by local youths in the Valletta Rio Sanpietro Park. The event gathered around 300 young people, including a large number of foreign nationals. The 'Job Club' has also been successful in reaching out to aspiring young professionals, with 42 young people coming to receive information and support on how to gain work experience.

While advocacy and youth consultation in local decision-making remain at the development stage, the support and interest of public partners have grown together with the programme. The city's Department for Culture has announced the launch of an ideas competition for 2011 on youth participation based on the YEPP approach in all of its nine municipalities. In terms of access to the labour market and contacts with the business community, however, great challenges remain and a more effective strategy is required. Young people in the area have already made plans to create a monthly magazine on work experiences in Cornigliano, produce a film on labour issues, and organize a competition for young entrepreneurs.

Meet Edoardo from Cornigliano:

"Change can be an opportunity or a problem, it's up to you"



"My name is Edoardo. I'm 25 and I live in Cornigliano, where I was born. I live in a small neighbourhood where we all know each other from childhood and always meet in the same café, the only one in the area. My parents made me attend schools in the city centre to focus on my studies and not hang out with the same local friends all the time. I'm now studying political science at the university. Cornigliano is always on the move, it keeps changing. Change can be an opportunity or a problem depending on how you approach it: you get swallowed up by change or make a chance out of it. I took part in the Job Club to exchange views on the labour situation in Italy and how to stop the brain drain of young people. I feel that Genoa has always been able to come out of its problems, and so has Cornigliano. Taking part in transnational YEPP events, I learned a lot, improved my English and got a new perspective on the problems we face. Going back home nobody thinks you're the new Obama, but you can try to change the things you don't like in the world you live in."

Key messages

- Given a chance, young people can contribute significantly to urban regeneration with creative and sustainable solutions.
- Intercultural dialogue with immigrant communities is most effective through common projects from an early age.

For a full portrait of the local site and its young people, visit the section on Genoa-Cornigliano on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org

Langhe:

partnership of municipalities broadens young people's horizons

Area/city:

Langhe

Country:

Italy

Key facts & figures:

18,077 inhabitants

11.7% young people under 25
8 villages grouped in a partnership
400 wine cellars and 500 restaurants



Flourishing vineyards... but few opportunities for young people

YEPP Langhe is a partnership of eight municipalities that are part of the largest wine-growing area of the Piedmont region in northern Italy. Over the past 15 years, wine-making and rural tourism have strengthened the local economy and raised the international profile of the area. However, this prosperity has yet to be translated into social assets for the local community, and in particular for its young people. When YEPP Langhe was set up in 2009, only two of the participating villages had a youth centre; most of the associations and institutions in the area focus on adults and do not engage with young people under the age of 25.

The consequences of this form of marginalisation include an increase in alcohol and drug consumption among young people, often compounded by their driving under the influence of these stimulants because of a lack of public transport. Overall, young people in Langhe feel there are very few opportunities to contribute actively to their community. To address these issues and create a critical mass for youth participation, eight villages have joined forces to enable young people to take the lead in developing activities that can open new perspectives for themselves and their communities. The villages are Castiglione Falletto, Grinzane Cavour, Monforte D'Alba, Novello, Roddi, Cherasco, Narzole and Dogliani. These villages work in partnership with two foundations: the regional Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Cuneo and the national Compagnia di San Paolo.

An inclusive and comprehensive preparation phase

Initial awareness-raising activities by YEPP Langhe led to the creation of a Local Support Group to involve young people from across the area in the planning and organisation of activities. The number of young people in the Local Support Group grew from 27 in 2009 to 42 in 2010. Together with the local YEPP team and the 11 adult members of the group, they compiled a wide range of data to analyse the needs of the community, which resulted in the planning of an initial set of three projects that were launched in 2010.

The main goals identified by YEPP Langhe were to involve a greater number of young people in local community life, to empower them to plan and manage activities, to develop their communication and advocacy skills, and to raise awareness of youth issues among local decision-makers. From December 2010 to February 2011, members of the Local Support Group (young people, youth workers and other stakeholders) held several meetings to discuss the activities they had undertaken, the progress they had made, the difficulties encountered, the criticism received and the outputs achieved.

Empowerment through new structures, media and sports activities

Meeting place: young people opened and managed two additional youth centres in Roddi and Novello, following successful negotiations with the municipalities. This has helped them develop organisational and financial management skills, while testing the idea of a shuttle service for key events.

• **Multimedia:** web, video and radio workshops led to the creation of the local LNG-Media production team, run by 12 young people. A total of 30 meetings have been organised including training, planning and production (video contribution for nomination as UNESCO World Heritage Site, interviews with local residents, etc).

• **Sport and health:** 50 young people from two of the larger villages organised joint sport tournaments in September and October 2010, working with four local sports associations.





◆ **Youth Bank:** following a YEPP training event in Warsaw in August 2009, Langhe representatives at a national YEPP event in Italy drafted the statutes for a Youth Bank Langhe. The project is in the process of forming a Youth Bank committee of young people.

Youth participation, sustainable channels and growing partnership

With a year of planning and a year of operational work under their belts, the young people of YEPP Langhe have already developed a new range of skills and deepened their participation in the wider community. As the number of participants grows, the practical and organisational experience already gained will be valuable in developing sustainable youth participation channels. A constant challenge for all activities is the lack of public transport to ensure regular attendance at meetings, an issue that is being raised with adults and the municipalities.



The partnership model at municipal level has been one of the most impressive successes so far, with an additional three villages now considering joining YEPP Langhe. The pooling of resources for youth initiatives in the area has also strengthened fundraising capacities, as YEPP Langhe obtained extra funding from the Youth Ministry and National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI). The partnership model has even taken on an international dimension, with the city of Novello activating a twinning programme with fellow YEPP site Kristinestad in Finland.

Key messages

- ◆ Lack of mobility, even in relatively affluent rural areas, creates significant social challenges that must be addressed through youth and community empowerment.
- ◆ Partnerships between fragmented municipalities in rural areas multiply opportunities for young people and strengthen fundraising capacity.

Meet the young people from Langhe:
“YEPP can be very useful for the future”



For a full portrait of the local site and its young people, visit the section on Langhe on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org

“Before YEPP, we were taking part in some youth centre activities. Our coordinator Livio got us involved in this new project. We started going around the area to organise meetings and build the project from the ground.”

“The town hall got me involved in YEPP. I was quite sceptical at the beginning but then discovered it was interesting. If you show interest in the opportunities YEPP offers, they can be very useful for the future.”

“I’ve been part of YEPP from the beginning. At first I joined to be part of musical projects as a singer, including concerts and videos. Then I discovered video editing and it helped me develop new skills.”

“The guys are fantastic and the group works really well. Every new idea and initiative is met with great enthusiasm and we all work hard to complete the projects.”

“We can create our own content on the radio and in our videos, content that is much more interesting for young people than the stuff they show on TV.”

La Spezia:

recreating a community in an industrial port

Area/city:

La Spezia

Country:

Italy

Key facts & figures:

**Two districts:
Canaletto and Fossamastra**

**6,692 inhabitants
(95,378 for the whole city)**

**11% immigrants
80.8% of residents over 25**

Living by the sea: from fishing to ship-building and containers

La Spezia is the second largest city in Liguria behind Genoa, having been transformed from a fishing village to a major industrial port in the mid-19th century. The historical development of the port has had a profound impact on the city's landscape and demographic composition, particularly in the neighbourhoods to the east of the city, where the YEPP model was implemented. Successive waves of industrial immigration changed the area's identity and challenged its social cohesion, with migrants coming initially from other regions in Italy, then later from Eastern Europe and Latin America.

The neighbouring districts of Canaletto and Fossamastra have benefited most from the expansion of the industrial port, which provided local residents with new employment opportunities in the shipping industry. The pre-industrial lifestyle of fishermen and mussel farmers still finds echoes in celebrations such as the Palio del Golfo, a traditional rowing competition between villages, which includes a street parade of the floats. However, the growing diversity of the area makes it challenging to maintain a strong and inclusive sense of community. Another rising concern for residents is the impact of decades of industrial activity on the environment, in particular poor air quality and the lack of green spaces.

Shortage of space and opportunities for young people

The two districts of Canaletto and Fossamastra offer a large number of cultural activities organised by the community, with a strong emphasis on transmitting local traditions. However, there are few regular activities for young people beyond school and sports, leaving the city centre as the preferred meeting point for entertainment and social life. To help turn the new generation into active members of the community, the city, region and local partners came together in March 2009 to launch YEPP La Spezia. A wide-ranging consultation of associations and citizens led to the creation of a Local Support Group and the conception of a first Operational Plan within a year.

The defined objectives and vision were to create a lively neighbourhood which would encourage young people to spend more of their spare time in the area and engage in activities that would benefit them and other citizens. An essential part of this plan was to create the area's first meeting place exclusively dedicated to and run by young people. From the start, YEPP La Spezia worked in parallel with wider urban regeneration plans launched by the municipality as part of a more active programme for civil participation and community development in the area.

Celebrating youth initiatives, local identity and practical training

YEPP La Spezia launched its first cycle of activities in the summer of 2010, with three main areas of action:

• **Summer of YEPP: Youth Outside:** a series of outdoor activities including concerts, multicultural dinners and musical workshops. Through these events, young people have developed their organisational skills and creativity, giving themselves and fellow community members a positive image. These activities have helped breathe new life into the neighbourhoods, while strengthening intergenerational and intercultural dialogue.

• **Youth Centre and Sea Culture:** the creation of a youth and community centre with a maritime theme to celebrate the natural and historical identity of the neighbourhood. One of the aims here is to connect the city's memory with its future. For example, the creation of a magazine to inform residents about the centre's activities has been proposed.





• **Learning and Educational Support:**

the organisation of educational support classes for pupils with difficulties. The project aims to develop cooperation between children, young people and adults, to promote language skills in a multicultural neighbourhood and to offer an informal and recreational approach to learning that complements formal schooling.

In addition to these local activities, young people from La Spezia have also taken part in the transnational YEPP Youth Bank initiative, which offers an opportunity to develop their skills and positively affect their community back home.

Broad participation and new infrastructure: a promising start

In two years of activity, YEPP La Spezia has involved more than 50 citizens in the planning and implementation of activities, with a core group of 20 people, including 14 young people, in the Local Support Group. Maintaining close cooperation with local associations has proved more difficult however, with individual commitment very much at the heart of the process, which represents a challenge in terms of structural continuity. The active involvement

of the local team has also been an essential factor in developing *ad hoc* partnerships and implementing joint activities. The aim for the long term is for local young people to reach a higher level of autonomy in the implementation of projects.

The partnership with the municipality has been a strong pillar of YEPP La Spezia since its creation. It has led to the opening of the youth centre, which provides visibility and a sense of ownership to the young people and adults involved. While the planning and early stages of activities have been undertaken with enthusiasm, the implementation and follow-up have suffered at times from a lack of organisation and awareness of the level of commitment required. However, the strong motivation and vision of a core group have led them to share their experience of YEPP with other youth groups in the area and identify opportunities for regional collaboration as part of an extended network.

Key messages

- The involvement of young people in community initiatives not only increases their own self-esteem but can make the community at large more aware of their value and of the role they play.
- Structural continuity requires the involvement of local associations and community representatives, not just individual commitment.
- Operational Plans must make clear the resources and level of individual commitment required to implement the activities initiated by the group.

For a full portrait of the local site and its young people, visit the section on La Spezia on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org

Meet Laura from La Spezia:

“Young people are underestimated in our society”



“Hello, my name is Laura. I’m 17 and originally from Iasi, Romania. I’ve been living in Fossamastra for six years. I’ve been involved in YEPP from the start. We’ve managed to organise successful events such as a concert in the city centre and a multicultural party in a big venue, and I’ve had the chance to attend a Youth Bank workshop in Warsaw. I think organisational skills are important to face everyday life in any path we take, and that’s something we’re developing with YEPP. In our society, young people are underestimated and we must advocate for our right to be heard.”



Loano:

young people as autonomous agents of change

Area/city:

Loano

Country:

Italy

Key facts & figures:

12,064 inhabitants

**Popular seaside resort
Up to 50,000 residents
in the summer**

**Favourable microclimate
due to nearby mountains**

Low season, reduced opportunities in a small seaside resort

Loano is a small city on the Ligurian Sea in the northwest of Italy with a summer population around five times that of the low season, respectively 50,000 and 12,000 inhabitants. In the summer, student jobs and cultural events offer opportunities for young people to participate in local life. However, for the greater part of the year there are virtually no youth-targeted initiatives or job programmes.

The lack of social and economic opportunity has led to an exodus of young people, and pensioners now make up the majority of Loano's permanent residents. Large numbers of local boys and girls decide to leave Loano to study and work elsewhere, not thinking of returning before they have families – families being the only group of people who seem to have a say in local affairs, together with tourists and pensioners. This on-going process makes it difficult to develop a vibrant and modern local identity that could inspire an active community.

Building a common strategy with young people: a successful example of youth ownership

The city of Loano and local associations have run a number of youth projects over the years, but until recently these lacked a shared and inclusive approach that would give young people a sense of initiative and engagement in the community. Following contacts with Compagnia di San Paolo and local actors, the municipality decided to adopt and implement the YEPP model in 2007. The positions of Local Coordinator and Evaluation Facilitator were established and the team started to involve young people and other stakeholders.

This led to the development of a Local Support Group as a core group of active young people determined to use the new YEPP approach to drive change for themselves and their community.

They carried out a situation analysis and found that priorities for young people in Loano were a dynamic cultural life, places for socialising and job training programmes. Although these young community leaders took the lead in developing activities with their peers, collaboration with adults and association representatives has been limited. This put the early emphasis on concrete and enthusiastic action at the expense of evaluation and long-term planning. Continuous and effective support from the YEPP local team in implementing the Cycle of Change, in particular through participatory monitoring, helped to create an environment of structured learning and improvement.

Officina delle Arti, a meeting place and laboratory for local expression

Together with the municipality and local partners, young people established the *Officina delle Arti* (Art Laboratory) in 2008. The venue has become a new space for meeting other young people, learning, developing new skills and gathering useful information. Free courses have been offered to young people aged 12-25 in a number of creative fields: drawing, music, photography, theatre, TV and web community projects. More than 100 young people took part in the courses with an average regular attendance of 80%. There was, however, a strong gender imbalance, with more than 70% of participants being male.

The objectives of the various activities are to increase youth participation in Loano, reduce social isolation and raise self-esteem through new forms of expression. An active exchange of information has also been established through a dedicated website, allowing an online community of young people to share ideas and the results of their activities.





Furthermore, young people have developed their advocacy skills through a strategic partnership with the municipality. They have initiated public dialogue on issues of general interest to the community, such as the installation of more wireless internet spots and policies that respect the local environment.

Wider coverage, new partnerships, advocacy and autonomy

Since its creation in 2007, YEPP Loano has changed the way young people interact and contribute to the local community. Young people have been the driving force behind the Local Support Group's planning and implementation of activities. As part of this process of increased youth participation, shortcomings in organisation and evaluation have been acknowledged and addressed to ensure continuous improvement. In particular, it is important for young people to be given realistic mandates so that they do not feel they have failed or that they need to give responsibilities back to adults. One particular area of satisfaction for the Local Support Group has been the transfer of skills and experience

from young people experienced in the YEPP programme to newcomers. In the coming years, YEPP Loano has identified a number of challenges it needs to address in order to give greater impact to its activities. One goal is to create different youth meeting centres to expand informal learning to different parts of the city. Another area for expansion is to develop greater partnerships with local associations, which have so far preferred to focus on their own projects. This could be achieved by opening up the Local Support Group to more stakeholders.

In terms of advocacy, YEPP Loano has drawn on its strong local partnership with the municipality to take part in regional youth advocacy projects, including a regional web platform for young people. In order to sustain these activities and gain more financial autonomy, the young people of Loano have started to make plans for the creation of a youth hostel that would host visitors, provide job training services and serve as an active community centre. As a result of their successful work, the municipality of Loano adopted the YEPP approach as a guideline for local youth policies.



Meet Stefano and Andrea from Loano: *young community leaders in the making*



Stefano is 21 and Andrea 24. They both live in Loano but have been studying in other cities (respectively foreign languages in Genoa and marketing and tourism economics in Savona). Andrea is now back in Loano working as a marketing promoter. They both joined YEPP in 2007 to take part in the social and cultural regeneration of their town and engage in local life as active citizens. They collaborated on the website and have taken part in transnational activities – a YEPP advocacy workshop in Gollwitz (Germany) in Stefano's case, and, in Andrea's, the YEPP community conference and youth meeting on youth participation in Genoa. Stefano would like to see more vocational training and job opportunities for young people by raising the awareness of youth issues among adults and decision-makers. Andrea believes the establishment of a youth council in Loano would help young people push for local change. Both feel they have grown personally and professionally through their experience with YEPP, learning how to turn ideas into reality and how to accept different views as part of a team.

Key messages

- Ownership of local activities by young people leads to a wealth of initiatives and projects that empower them and the community as a whole.
- Young people must be supported to undertake solid continuous evaluation in order to learn from the process, improve the organisation of projects and increase their impact.
- Open public consultations of young people can open new avenues for local policy innovations on issues such as new technology and the environment.

For a full portrait of the local site, visit the section on Loano on the YEPP website:
www.yepp-community.org



The Gate Youth Network in Turin:

building a community of communities

Area/city:

Porta Palazzo, Turin

Country:

Italy

Key facts & figures:

8,107 registered residents

**Europe's largest open-air market
with 1,000 market sellers and
up to 100,000 visitors on Saturdays**

**19.2% of immigrants
(4% in Turin overall)**



Life in Porta Palazzo: an intense experience

Porta Palazzo in Turin is a unique urban area, home to Europe's largest street market. Every week since 1856, thousands of locals and visitors have been shopping at the hundreds of stalls dotted around Piazza della Repubblica. The market makes the area a vibrant meeting point for many communities while offering recent immigrants the chance of temporary work. But the constant ebb and flow also brings challenges to Porta Palazzo, from vulnerable illegal work to drug trafficking and social exclusion. The regular influx of visitors has always made it difficult to create a sense of belonging and community among those living in the area, leading to difficulties for local young people.

How YEPP entered The Gate

To address these difficulties, a number of local organisations decided to create the Gate Youth Network in 2003, as part of a wider urban renovation project (The Gate) launched in 1998. Combining different approaches to community work, the organisations joined forces to help young people play an active role in their area. The Gate Youth Network allowed people from various professional backgrounds to meet with local young people and discuss ways to improve social and cultural life in Porta Palazzo. Network members have included youth workers, mediators, teachers and volunteers. In 2007, YEPP's partner foundation and one of the network's funders, Compagnia di San Paolo, invited The Gate to join YEPP's transnational platform. This was done without changing the existing methodology and structure of the local network, by granting Porta Palazzo the status of affiliated local programme site – a first for YEPP. Thanks to the dedication of local coordinators and close links with the Turin-based EmpowerMediaNetwork, Porta Palazzo has since been able to contribute actively to YEPP's community events and use the Concept of Change to develop and structure local activities.

Focusing on local assets: market jobs and cultural diversity

Since 2003, the Gate Youth Network has held regular meetings with local associations and young people to assess the needs of the community and to find new ways to address issues raised. Using the YEPP approach to youth empowerment, partner organisations have formed a local support group to give additional input and visibility to their initiatives. The focus of actions in Porta Palazzo has been on creating positive links among local young people from different cultural backgrounds, as well as with the adults living and working in the area. This has helped young people develop their leadership and professional skills. Key actions initiated by the Gate Youth Network since 2003 have included:

- Mapping the infrastructure and support resources available to young people in Porta Palazzo to improve access to existing services
- Holding open events for young people in critical locations where illegal activities were taking place
- Setting up a workshop for a group of young people to design the project's website
- Holding a series of cultural courses including theatre, video, creative writing and hip-hop dance, with exhibitions of final works
- Creating a work experience project for young people to provide gift-wrapping services to market traders during the Christmas period
- Developing a sports lab project to secure access to public sports facilities for young people and produce a code of conduct in different languages





Impact of and challenges for youth empowerment in Porta Palazzo

Through the local support group and the various community actions initiated by the network, YEPP has helped young people create sustainable change for themselves and their communities. The work inclusion action in 2010 resulted in 11 work placements for local young people with unanimous satisfaction for all involved, including the host companies. The theatre and video workshops have also increased young people's confidence and helped them to contribute actively to their communities. Following the YEPP transnational video workshop held in Dublin in 2008, enthusiastic young participants set up a local video lab with the help of video experts. In some cases, this has opened new career perspectives (see Ahmed's story in the featured box).

In terms of improving neighbourhood relations and dialogue between different communities, the sports lab launched in 2009 has shown young people the benefits of reaching out and engaging in common activities. But more needs to be done to strengthen the relationship with

the municipality so that the issue of drugs and illegal activities in the area can be addressed. In the future, the Gate Youth Network is looking for new member organisations and plans to increase its links with the community. Drawing from a YEPP fundraising workshop in Genoa in 2010, new strategies to secure funding for projects will be developed. There are also plans to develop (strengthen) the newly established Youth Bank Porta Palazzo and launch a second cycle of the work inclusion action in 2011. Finally, the opportunity to take part in transnational activities will be used to promote active citizenship and advocacy by young people at a national and European level.

Key messages

- Structured youth empowerment creates best practices for community-building and intercultural dialogue.
- Public intervention and dialogue with youth organizations are necessary to address high-risk factors such as drug trafficking.

For a full portrait of the local site and its young people, visit the section on Turin "The Gate" on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org

Ahmed from Porta Palazzo:
"The future is today!"



"My name is Ahmed. I'm 18 and from a mixed Moroccan-French background. I study geography in Turin. My friends say I'm funny and easy-going, but also sometimes egocentric and a bit of a show-off. I like spending time in youth centres or just having fun with my friends. My ambition is to work in the film industry. I live in the Aurora area of Porta Palazzo, a difficult place but at the same time one of the best to live in: you can find anything you want here in the centre with a lot of multicultural shops nearby in the market, the biggest one in Europe. When I think of the future I just think of today! Thanks to "The Gate" network I now have new interests such as learning many different languages, and travelling and meeting people from other places. What I would recommend for the future of YEPP in Porta Palazzo is to provide more vocational training to young people, not only in youth work to train other young people but also in other fields."



Turin-Mirafiori: structural change through formal community structures

Area/city:

Turin Mirafiori

Country:

Italy

Key facts & figures:

39,206 inhabitants

**Area of 11.49 km²
density of 3,412/km²**

Flagship FIAT factory since 1939



A community centred on the factory

Mirafiori is an area to the south of Turin that has become synonymous with the city's industrial development. Its modern history started with the opening of the flagship FIAT factory in 1939, transforming an agricultural area of 3,000 inhabitants into a working class neighbourhood of 40,000 in just 20 years. The vast majority of these newcomers were migrants from southern Italy, who experienced hard living conditions as it took time for local infrastructure to catch up with the growing demand, particularly in terms of independent accommodation for manual workers and their families.

Council houses form large parts of Mirafiori. It has high levels of unemployment and a number of disadvantages that have greatly affected the community and created risk factors for young people. Against the backdrop of international competition and industrial decline, local residents have long expressed their desire to improve the image of Mirafiori and create new opportunities for jobs and community activities. Before YEPP's appearance on the scene, a number of local NGOs and public agencies were already active in the social field in Mirafiori, but communication and coordination between them was generally lacking.

YEPP's model of partnership leads to independent structure

The story of YEPP in Turin-Mirafiori started in 2002 when partner foundation Compagnia di San Paolo and the municipality identified the area's high potential for youth and community empowerment. As urban regeneration plans were already in place, including the opening of a new youth centre, YEPP offered an ideal model to involve young people in the process and help them overcome social disadvantage. The initial priority areas for action were the development of meeting places for young people, job opportunities, the inclusion of young people at risk and increased cooperation between local community actors.

Following a successful and wide-ranging consultation phase, a Local Support Group of 14 member organisations was created in late 2003. It brought together public institutions (the local municipality, public libraries and a high school), NGOs involved in social and educational work, community development and environmental issues, and a vocational training school, as well as two youth organisations with members aged between 17 and 25. The local municipality and five of these organisations became permanent features of YEPP and the Community Foundation that succeeded it in 2008, forming a core around which a number of other partners operate. The creation of the Mirafiori Community Foundation (see text box over) was a turning point for the area's history of community empowerment, as well as a unique development for a YEPP local site.

Community TV, business incubator, participation and Youth Bank

The first Operational Plan was launched in 2004 and focused on educational and cultural projects with young people at risk to develop their skills, create a positive image of Mirafiori, attract visitors from outside and overcome social barriers. This initial round of activities saw young people make videos on the neighbourhood and its history, organise musical events and prizes, produce promotional material for YEPP and undertake training in web and digital media.

Building on evaluation results from the first phase, the second and third Operational Plans (2005-06 and 2006-07) added new empowerment objectives and methods, focusing on three areas of action: a community TV channel, a business incubator and youth participation initiatives. *Mirafiori TV* was set up in 2005 with local young





people and has been hosted by the city's video laboratory since 2006, with the participation of two university students as coaches. The business incubator has been offering support for local young entrepreneurs, providing tutoring and advice over three years to selected projects (8 out of 20 from the initial call for proposals). Young people have also designed and run a number of youth projects, including the publication of a school newspaper and a web radio.

A youth centre opened in Mirafiori in October 2004, providing space and support for YEPP activities. After its creation in 2008 (see text box), the Mirafiori Community Foundation carried on youth empowerment work in the centre through a number of 'institutional projects'. These include homework support and summer activities for students with academic challenges, legal advice for disadvantaged residents and the creation of a YEPP-inspired Youth Bank. Run by a group of dedicated young people who formed their own volunteer association, Youth Bank Mirafiori launched its first call for proposals in September 2010. It has awarded a total of €10,000 to three projects that were selected from 12 applications.



Mirafiori Community Foundation: *formal structure with broader scope*



Discussions on the creation of a formal organisation to run local projects started in early 2005 around issues of funding and project management. In September 2006, the Local Support Group decided to form the Mirafiori Community Foundation, with a view to using YEPP's methods of partnership and participatory evaluation on a larger scale. The idea was to capitalise on changes introduced by YEPP and create a sustainable framework that would formally link the municipality, the Compagnia di San Paolo and local YEPP partners (who formed their own 'Miravolante' association).

While it incorporates youth empowerment objectives, the community foundation also aims to become a central player in the overall social, economic and educational development of the local community. A governance structure was established with the appointment of steering and executive boards. This development can be seen as the expansion and ultimate validation of the YEPP approach, with the community foundation keen to maintain links between its youth branch and YEPP through a memorandum of understanding.

From successful partnership to engaging local young people and residents

A key impact of YEPP in Mirafiori has been to transform a fragmented group of actors and organisations in the social field into a framework of partnership and cooperation. This process was made possible from the start by the emphasis on continuous participatory planning and evaluation. Representatives of the local district and larger municipality have also been an integral part of the partnership with local associations. This has contributed to sustainable and cooperative advocacy through the adoption and mainstreaming of YEPP principles in local decision-making.

However, grassroots involvement of local residents and young people has been more difficult to secure. While they have participated in one-off events and activities, such as a *Mirafiori TV* video produced by young people from the streets, they have not been involved in long-term planning and monitoring. One lesson is that educational backgrounds and social skills have a strong influence on people's participation in their wider community. For the most disadvantaged residents, low participation is therefore better than no participation. Small steps are necessary to achieve sustainable results, a process that also requires good quality public education and social services.

Key messages

- Formal community structures built on the YEPP model of partnership can bring about institutional youth and community empowerment.
- Participatory planning and evaluation can help establish sustainable cooperation between previously isolated local actors.
- Young people facing serious educational and social challenges are hard to reach and keep involved, but can benefit greatly from incremental participation.

For a full portrait of the local site and its activities, visit the section on Turin-Mirafiori on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org

Warsaw-Bielany: practical skills through grassroots projects

Area/city:

Bielany, Warsaw

Country:

Poland

Key facts & figures:

**One of the capital's
18 administrative districts**

**132,000 inhabitants
(8% of the city's population)**

Land area of 32.3 km²

Life on the edge of Warsaw

A large suburban area in north-western Warsaw, Bielany is home to a predominantly working class and ageing population. However, recent infrastructure investments in new transport systems and housing projects have transformed the local landscape and brought new professionals to the area, creating social and economic contrasts with the existing population. This changing situation can be particularly disorienting for local young people, who do not always feel included in regeneration plans.

Tensions and frustrations are compounded by the lack of an integrated civil society in Bielany. As a large area on the periphery, it has always been difficult to create a sense of local identity and community that would bring residents of different ages and backgrounds together. The challenges facing young people in Bielany include drug and alcohol abuse, safety problems at school and an overall sense of alienation from job opportunities and community life, especially after leaving high school.

YEPP, a catalyst for local resources and youth involvement

Since its launch in 2007, YEPP Bielany has been able to mobilise a wide range of local and national actors: two local youth clubs, a centre for community initiatives, a public institute for culture, a social care centre, a municipal office and two partner foundations (the international Evens Foundation and the Polish Children and Youth Foundation). YEPP's approach has enabled the local partners to coordinate their resources and increase the visibility of their actions.

A dedicated team of youth workers has managed to set up a local support group. Meetings take place on a monthly basis and good contacts have been established with the Bielany Youth Council. A core team of 10 experienced young people has also emerged to implement projects such as the Youth Bank. By creating channels for dialogue and cooperation on youth initiatives, YEPP Bielany has tapped into the vast enthusiasm and energy of local young people to create change in their community.





From 'My Activity' to 'Local Youth Fund': empowerment and entrepreneurship

Starting in 2008, YEPP Bielany has supported a significant number of projects with a focus on developing the social and practical skills of local young people to increase their participation in the local community and labour market. In 2008-09, around 120 youngsters took part in the 'My Activity' project, attending 2-month practical workshops and implementing group projects in various cultural fields. In doing so they had to develop independent thinking and get a feel for project management in areas related to their personal interests.

This approach to practical training and entrepreneurship was taken further in 2010 with the establishment of a Youth Bank Bielany in the shape of the 'Local Youth Fund'. After the YEPP Youth Bank training in Warsaw in the summer of 2009, a group of young people was trained to establish the local Youth Bank Committee and published a call for proposals for their peers from the area. During its two phases, this youth-managed social investment fund awarded grants to 17 projects involving around 100 young people aged 15 to 20.



An immediate impact that must be sustained

In two and a half years of operational work, strong local partnerships and well-targeted projects have resulted in the participation of over 320 young people in YEPP's various activities, a considerable reach even for an area the size of Bielany. More efforts are needed to translate this early success into sustainable change, in particular through the development of advocacy activities and structured dialogue with the municipality. Such a dialogue is already taking place on the issue of bike lanes and parking areas for young people, as well as on the creation of a permanent youth desk at the municipality.

In terms of sustainable youth and community empowerment, a number of remaining obstacles must also be addressed and overcome. While young people have benefited from vocational training and practical experience, few businesses have so far made use of these local skills by providing internship opportunities. Local young people believe that more efforts should be made by all local actors to create a sense of common identity for the district, which remains in many ways a fragmented community of different housing estates.

Meet Konrad from Bielany:

"I've learnt how to use my spare time better"



Konrad is 18 and lives in a quiet block of flats in the Wrzeciono area of Bielany, an area where pensioners are the majority. "The issue in the neighbourhood is that there aren't any facilities for young people to hang out, not even benches or green spaces," he says. He got involved in YEPP through one of the partners, the local Wrzeciono youth club. A great fan of graffiti, Konrad has led several street art projects for which he received small Youth Bank grants. He attended Local Support Group meetings and also took part in project management training, which he put into practice by fundraising for and coordinating his graffiti projects. "I've learnt how to use my spare time better and got to meet new people in the area", he says. He now hopes to further develop his skills by studying to become a sports trainer in handball.

Key messages

- Social investment funds managed by young people develop their skills while creating improvements for the whole community.
- Targeted efforts and cooperation with local businesses are necessary to transfer skills from voluntary projects to the labour market.

For a full portrait of the local site and its young people, visit the section on Warsaw-Bielany on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org

Kecerovce-Olšava: breaking down the barriers of social exclusion of Roma

Area/city:

Kecerovce-Olšava microregion

Country:

Slovakia

Key facts & figures:

**YEPP active in four villages:
Rankovce, Boliarov, Kecerovce,
Vtáčkovce**

**5,369 inhabitants
44% of people under 25
Around 50% of population
marginalised**



Deep social disadvantages in a rural community

The Kecerovce-Olšava microregion is in eastern Slovakia, 30km to the north-east of Košice, the country's second largest city. It brings together 15 villages with a total of around 10,000 inhabitants. Segregated Roma communities form the majority of a population whose average age is low and with high levels of unemployment and poverty. The overall infrastructure is poor: gas and water supplies only cover part of the residential areas and there is no sewage or wastewater system. The area features natural attractions including two natural reserves and a geyser, as well as historical monuments such as churches and castles.

Most of the young people in the villages live in marginalised settlements on the edge of poverty. The minority of non-Roma youth tend to leave early to study and work in bigger cities. Roma communities depend largely on social benefits from the government, which operates a complex system of allowances and bonuses. Many children drop out of school with only basic primary education as they consider secondary school inaccessible or unnecessary. Linguistic barriers and the cost of bus transportation often outweigh the perceived benefits of higher education. Children as young as ten therefore stay at home or in the streets, exposed to a number of health and social risks, some of them experimenting with the inhalation of volatile substances, sometimes to combat hunger. Another factor that contributes to low school attendance is the traditional role attributed to young girls, who are expected to work in their family household until they marry and give birth around the age of 16. In recent years, the "income" from government-sponsored child benefits has further increased the pressure on girls to follow this pattern.

Identifying partners and creating a partnership of villages

The creation of a YEPP site in Kecerovce-Olšava is the result of a successful collaboration between local and international actors. A YEPP representative first visited the region to meet the local team in February 2010, contacting the Civil Association Centre for Community Development (OZ Centrum Pre Komunitný Rozvoj), of which both current YEPP Evaluation Facilitators are employees. A careful selection of partner villages was carried out in order to create the conditions for a consistent and effective local partnership for youth and community empowerment. The four villages of Rankovce, Boliarov, Kecerovce and Vtáčkovce were chosen for their mixed Roma and non-Roma populations, institutional ties through a common primary school, established family

relations and existing social programmes which are being implemented across the villages. Geographically, the four villages are located within five kilometres of each other. With the support of the Austrian ERSTE Stiftung, a YEPP local team of two Local Coordinators and two Evaluation Facilitators was formed, evenly split between Roma and non-Roma members.



A contract was signed in October 2010 with the Civil Association for a Better Life (OZ Pre Lepší Život), which employs the two Local Coordinators. While carrying out the situation analysis of the challenges and needs of young people and their community in the four villages, the core team developed contacts with a wider network of community actors. Given the importance of families in Roma communities, local authority figures were consulted together with youth workers, members of the local councils and school administrators.

Existing programmes, issues for young people and youth workers

The situation analysis confirmed that the four partner villages share a number of challenges and issues. From the young people's point of view, there is a clear lack of infrastructure for leisure time activities. The sport facilities are limited in number and access, with only one of the two football fields available for free. Social and cultural meeting spaces for young people are equally limited, with a number of clubs and public premises closing down in recent years.



Scouting in particular used to provide regular opportunities for after-school activities but the organisation could not replace its departing director. The lack of opportunities has contributed to the worrying trend of recreational drug and alcohol abuse among young people, in particular the sniffing of toluene and other volatile substances. Addiction to gambling is also common in the villages, with boredom often cited as the main reason for such behaviour.

To engage in more constructive activities, young people in all the villages expressed a clear desire to take part in clubs, associations, sports activities and musical projects. They are hoping for more infrastructures and resources to be able to express their talents and vision for the future of their community. Local folk and contemporary Roma bands exist but find it hard to find places to rehearse and perform. Dancing is also a prominent part of Roma culture and the demand is high for more structural support for arts in general in the area. A local folk band used to tour the region and even went to perform abroad in Italy, but its activities later came to a halt when its leader left Kecеровce village. Many young people hope that the local scene can be revived with new faces and resources.



These challenges have been identified and addressed by youth workers in recent years. Community and social programmes have provided opportunities for local young people in Kecеровce-Olšava to become active members of their community since 2004. An informal group of 10-15 young people has been taking part in training and coaching activities through community events and teenagers' clubs, learning how to plan and evaluate their activities while collaborating with other organisations. Further efforts are required to establish a

positive dynamics for youth participation and change, starting with both formal and non-formal education partners. The creation of new spaces and clubs, with the help of experts in cultural and social activities, is seen as a necessary condition to achieve lasting results. Improving relations between Roma and non-Roma residents and bridging the gender gap are also identified as important issues for sustainable community empowerment. Finally, the formal education system must be further developed to provide the basic skills for young people to develop personally and professionally. Local officials have vowed to continue their efforts to improve the public education services in the area, in particular secondary education, and avoid the exclusion of students with potential due to a lack of resources and traditional prejudices against Roma in formal education.

A vision for change in Kecеровce-Olšava

The situation in Kecеровce-Olšava exemplifies the need for a long-term approach to youth and community empowerment in an area where numerous factors combine to create deeply rooted social exclusion. The decision to implement the YEPP Cycle of Change in the partner villages is seen as a new window of opportunities for young people to improve their life and contribute positively to their community. The partnership model has already strengthened the dialogue between villages and generations, while allowing underlying frustrations and tensions to be vented. The local YEPP team has taken part in a number of transnational events and hopes to benefit from the exchange of ideas with peers from other countries. Giving young people the chance to travel abroad and take part in workshops and youth meetings is also seen as a powerful incentive to create local change and open new horizons for the community. Last but not least, the professional and financial support of YEPP and its partner foundation, the ERSTE Stiftung, is expected to contribute decisively to the process of local empowerment.

Key messages

- Dialogue with schools and educators is a fundamental part of community empowerment in disadvantaged areas.
- Ideas and content for activities are generated regardless of levels of social exclusion once dedicated time and space are created to develop community initiatives.

For a full portrait of the local site and its young people, visit the section on Kecеровce-Olšava on the YEPP website www.yepp-community.org



YEPP at transnational level: building a European network of local actors

Creating opportunities for sustainable cooperation and peer learning between local actors is at the heart of YEPP's transnational work. Transnational capacity-building workshops and training sessions help them develop a sustainable international network of stakeholders and pool expertise to build stronger partnerships. Facilitated and supported by the Programme Team, these are more than mere networking opportunities. All the partners in YEPP acknowledge the potential value of transnational cooperation for local development.

EMN

Launched at the first YEPP conference in Berlin in 2005, the EmpowerMediaNetwork has become a structural part of YEPP. It promotes active media work as a tool for youth and community empowerment among YEPP Local Programme Sites and beyond. Hundreds of young people have taken part in its innovative transnational workshops to develop their video skills and get their voices heard.



YEPP transnational activities

Complementing special grants from the Ford Foundation, Compagnia di San Paolo and the EU Youth in Action programme, YEPP's partner foundations supported the following transnational activities.

1. Youth exchanges

Through youth exchanges, young people have the opportunity to get to know the situation and activities in other Local Programme Sites. In the last four years over 230 young people aged 16 to 25 from across Europe participated in youth exchanges, including:

- Transnational youth meeting 'Seen & Heard', Dublin, Ireland, May 2007
- EMN Workshop 'Formats for broadcast quality projects', Antwerp, Belgium, August 2008
- EMN Workshop 'Media and communication ethics in the age of Web 2.0', Turin, Italy, November 2008
- EMN Workshop 'Sharing best practices', Turin, Italy, October 2009
- Youth advocacy event organized by Eurochild, Brussels, Belgium, July 2010

These exchanges aimed at empowering young people through different forms of creative expression, mainly digital media. They provided young people with basic video-making skills to document personal/local experiences and helped them to understand the role media plays in addressing issues such as identity and social inclusion, and how information can be manipulated – and also used - in fighting prejudice and discrimination. Building relations with others and meeting new people have been a major step forward for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

2. Capacity-building workshops and training sessions

Transnational capacity-building workshops and training sessions were organised on issues of common interest and value. The workshops were aimed at specific YEPP groups: Evaluation Facilitators, Local Coordinators, members of the Local Support Groups, EMN coaches and young people active in their local communities, and included the following:

- Training for Evaluation Facilitators in YEPP Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation, Turin, Italy, October 2008

- Training for EMN coaches 'Media Stacks', Knockree and Dublin, Ireland, January 2009
- Youth Bank Training, Warsaw, Poland, August 2009
- Advocacy workshop for the Local Teams, Gollwitz, Germany, November 2009
- Fundraising workshop for the Local Teams at the 4th YEPP Community Conference, Genoa, Italy, October 2010

Capacity-building workshops and training sessions helped members of the YEPP community to develop a range of skills relevant for their work in YEPP (strategic planning, stakeholder mapping, media techniques and facilitation, as well as participatory monitoring and evaluation), and deepened an understanding of some specific topics (advocacy, fundraising, etc). Facilitated by experts, all the training sessions used a 'hands-on' approach and served a double purpose: not only did they develop YEPP actors' personal skills in specific areas, but they also had a multiplying effect, enabling them to pass on the knowledge gained to their fellows at the Local Programme Sites (for example, the setting up of local youth banks).

3. Meetings of key local actors

Local Coordinators, Evaluation Facilitators and members of the Local Support Groups have come together to learn and exchange.

- Local Teams and EMN Coaches Meeting, Antwerp, Belgium, November 2007
- EMN Strategic Planning Meeting, Berlin, Germany, February 2008
- Evaluation Group Meeting, Berlin, Germany, April 2008
- Local Teams' Meeting, Gollwitz, Germany, November 2009
- YEPP Post 2011 Working Group meetings, 2009-2011

Recent meetings have evolved to address specific themes like advocacy, fundraising, evaluation or the future of YEPP. One distinct element of the second phase of YEPP (2007-2011) was the setting up of transnational management groups (such as the YEPP Evaluation Group, YEPP Post 2011 Working Group and the EMN Management Committee).



Youth Bank

Youth Bank is an innovative grantmaking scheme run by young people for young people. Small grants are awarded by a committee of young people to community projects submitted by their peers. Since 2009, Youth Banks have been established in nine YEPP Local Programme Sites with over 25,000 awarded in grants to 30 European youth projects. A Transnational Youth Bank Board has also selected a music festival project in Albenga (Musica Migrante) to receive a 15,000 Euro grant. Overall, more than 200 young people have gained first-hand leadership and project management experience through the project.

4. Study visits/bilateral exchanges

In the second phase of YEPP, it was decided to experiment with bilateral study visits of young people under the framework 'Videomaking across Europe'. As a result, several exchanges and joint video projects between young people involved in EMN took place:

- Dublin to Antwerp, April 2007
- Dublin to Kristinestad, August 2007
- Turin to Tuzla and Tuzla to Turin, May - October 2007
- Turin to Kristinestad and Kristinestad to Turin, May 2007 - January 2008

Among the local teams, cooperation included cross-border exchanges between neighbouring countries as well as exchanges of experience in certain areas:

- Finland (Kristinestad) and Italy (Langhe), 2009-2010
- Tuzla (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Osijek (Croatia), 2009
- Görlitz (Germany) and Zgorzelec (Poland), 2007-2011
- Kečerovce-Olšava (Slovakia) and Görlitz/Zgorzelec (Germany/Poland), 2011

Youth and adult exchanges between the YEPP sites strengthened ties with each other and developed understanding of the similarities and differences of cultures across Europe.

5. YEPP Community Conferences and Youth Meetings

These bring all the key YEPP stakeholders together and disseminate results and best practices of YEPP at local, regional, national and transnational levels. Four YEPP Community Conferences and Youth Meetings have gathered over 400 participants, around half of which were young people:

- 'From Innovation towards Systemic Change', Berlin, Germany, January 2005
- 'Influencing Policies through and for Empowerment and Partnership', Turin, Italy, March 2006
- 'Leading the Way – Another Europe is Possible. Changing policies through Youth and Community Empowerment and Partnerships', Dublin, Ireland, June 2008
- 'Diversity, Dialogue and Inclusion – European Youth as Agents of Social Change', Genoa, Italy, October 2010

YEPP Community Conferences and Youth Meetings are traditionally the highlight of YEPP's transnational work. They serve as a platform for intensive exchanges between young people, local teams, politicians and other stakeholders. Usually combined with capacity-building activities, these events help young people strengthen their cross-cultural competences as well as enhance their communication and presentation skills. For the adults, talking to young people and exchanging experiences among themselves is an opportunity to gain inspiration for their local work and learn about new participatory working methods and tools.

Impact of YEPP's transnational work

The transnational area of YEPP's work has been an important stimulus for local youth and community empowerment processes. It has helped to broaden the participants' horizon by encouraging them to learn from international experiences. Practical results of these empowerment processes are the Transnational Youth Bank Board, EMN and the YEPP Post 2011 Working Group, which are growing into transnational structures with great potential for future development.

Long-term transnational cooperation between YEPP sites also represents a challenge because of the language barrier, insufficient funds for mutual visits between local teams, and the high workload of Local Coordinators and Evaluation Facilitators. However, positive examples of bilateral cooperation are already there. In the new phase of YEPP, this transnational dimension would be preserved and further developed, developing the skills of those involved in the programme and providing a means of learning for the new YEPP organization.

For more information on YEPP's transnational activities, visit the YEPP website:

www.yepp-community.org



Partnership as a key concept of YEPP



Partnership has been at the heart of the entire YEPP framework. The highly complex nature of youth and community disempowerment and social exclusion requires truly integrated approaches based on partnerships across a wide range of sectors, governance levels and social groups.

Identity and Diversity

Sharing a “common ground” of joint situation analysis, goals, strategies and actions – a shared identity – is a basic precondition (and outcome) of a successful partnership. The Cycle of Change with its process-oriented approach has been described as a very useful tool in creating such an identity. However, the process takes time and the reward is rarely immediate. At some local sites it has proven difficult to keep the partners on board for such a long period. Many preferred tangible, near-term results (such as early actions) over more ambiguous longer-term objectives. The most frequent local response to this problem has been a combination of 1) coordination of the process, 2) establishing financial links (for example, joint fundraising, shared investments), 3) (formal) memorandum of understanding, and 4) joint actions in the early phase of the process.



The cross-sectoral nature of the YEPP partnership model, including public, private and non-governmental actors implies certain limitations on “how common” the ground among heterogeneous partners can be in a given local context. An early inclusion of the public sector has proven to be an effective way to build a cross-sectoral partnership and overcome or at least mitigate such limitations (for example in Langhe, Loano and Kristinestad). A special case is the municipality of Cornigliano in Genoa where the initiative for starting YEPP basically came from the public sector. The municipality of Loano is another example of a highly successful public-private partnership with a profound sense of ownership on the part of the municipality. Yet, the regular electoral cycles have often disrupted the partnership with the public sector, especially when not only the persons in charge change, but the political colour of the party in power as well (as happened recently in Albenga and Warsaw).

Participation and Communication

It is not only the diversity of actors in partnerships that is important, but also the intensity of their participation. Are the partners involved in all stages of the project cycle or do they act only as professional implementing agencies? Local sites reveal different levels of participation intensity, ranging from strong involvement of public institutions in Loano, Kristinestad, and Genoa, over a hands-off, but committed approach in Langhe and Tuzla, a relative indifference in Turin-Porta Palazzo and Warsaw to a currently conflict-laden relationship in Albenga. In the majority of cases,

representatives of public institutions are not active members of the Local Support Groups (LSGs), which also limits their involvement in the early phases of the Cycle of Change. Yet an early involvement of the public sector has often been a major factor in the sustainability and effectiveness of partnerships at the local level. In some cases like Turin-Mirafiori, Tuzla and Warsaw, the public sector gradually recognises the potential of YEPP and becomes more deeply involved.

Foundations have also been significant actors at some local sites, especially in Italy. For instance, the Turin-based Compagnia di San Paolo has pursued a rather unusual hands-on approach with regard to its funding activities within the YEPP framework, which has ensured a high level of trust and transparency between the foundation and its beneficiaries. However, the deep involvement of a financially powerful foundation was initially used as an excuse by the municipality of Turin not to engage in the process. It took over 8 years to change this and the city is now involved in the Community Foundation in Turin-Mirafiori. For that matter, the establishment of the community foundations in Turin and Tuzla has been regarded as the most impressive evidence of the overall success of the partnership in these two cities. Other municipalities were attracted to join YEPP because of the deep involvement of the foundation.

The involvement of young people has been another challenging issue. While some Local Support Groups (those in Loano and Albenga, for example) consist only of young people, some do not have any young people (like that in Turin-Porta Palazzo), but in the majority of cases there are at least one or two young people in the LSG. One good example of a formalised involvement of young people is the Community Foundation in Tuzla, which requires that 30% of the Board's members be young people. Youth Banks have been another way of involving young people at several local sites, giving them full financial and organisational responsibility for this endeavour. Yet even here, it has been difficult to involve the more disadvantaged groups. Most of the young people involved with YEPP in a more substantial way (for instance as board members) are well-educated middle-class students who happen to live in a disadvantaged area. Therefore, there is a strong need for a deeper discussion and exchange of best practices on how to include disadvantaged young people more effectively.



Equity and Human Relations

The YEPP framework has proven to be an excellent platform for building trust at various levels. The intense, long-standing and regular collaboration in the LSGs has offered those involved unique opportunities to get to know each other and build trust. This is important since most LSGs consist of actors who are usually on the opposite sides “of the fence” (public and private, youth and adults, donors and beneficiaries). One of the most valuable assets of the YEPP partnership model is this unique ability and clear methodology to forge relationships across different sectors and to reduce the “distance” between the partners in the LSG.

Even within a single sector, building trust can be a difficult undertaking. A telling example is the LSG in Turin-Porta Palazzo which consists of several civil society organisations which are usually direct competitors for scarce financial resources in the city of Turin. As a result of their cooperation in YEPP, a level of trust has been established so that joint proposals and information sharing are now more likely to be the rule than the exception. The Italian region of Langhe in Piedmont is another example of the power of partnership and trust. Italy is a very fragmented country: 57% of municipalities have less than 5000 inhabitants and yet there has been a long history of rivalry among them. Thanks to YEPP, eight small municipalities in Langhe have started to cooperate in order to improve the situation of young people – something described by some as a revolution on a small scale.

Effectiveness

Trust, openness and good leadership are the basic preconditions for effective partnerships. The YEPP methodology has frequently been described as a useful way of involving people and revealing what each member of the LSG can contribute to the community and the partnership as a whole. Looked at this way, partnership has proven to be very effective at all local sites. Members of several local sites reported that the local public sector pays more attention to youth issues, especially to the usually “forgotten” group of structurally disadvantaged young people. The local sites in Tuzla report an increased interest in voluntarism, philanthropy and democratic procedures among young people in the local community. Another effect has been the influence on the way in which participating organisations and public institutions work. The devising of an operational plan was an important innovation in the Youth Office of Kristinestad. Compagnia di San Paolo promotes the general principles of YEPP in other projects. Many actors report increased levels of international contacts which are, at least in some local sites, unusual for local organisations in the social field. This list of examples could be extended much further.

One particular effect deserves special attention. The YEPP partnership model was particularly effective in helping to develop a broader view of the future of young people across a whole community and moving the community in that direction. This can be done only in a multilevel, cross-sectoral, inter-generational partnership: a single actor or level can never affect the community in such a profound way.

Key messages

- Identity-building of a successful partnership takes time and requires a mix of process-oriented and action-oriented approaches.
- Cross-sectoral partnership implies a constant fine-tuning of common strategies and actions.
- It is never too early to start deepening the participation of institutional partners, in particular the public sector.
- Trust, openness and good leadership are the essential ingredients of effective and successful partnerships.

This insert is based on the executive summary of the “Partnership as a key concept of YEPP” Evaluation Report by Sanin Hasibovic. For the full report, visit the section on 10 Years of YEPP on the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org



YEPP as a partnership of foundations



YEPP is a collaborative initiative of several European and US foundations, the OECD and the International Akademie at the Freie Universität in Berlin (INA), under the auspices of the Network of European Foundations (NEF). For 10 years, YEPP has developed an innovative model of partnership between foundations: the shared funding and steering of a long-term transnational programme. Below is a summary of the views of past and present partners on this unique form of collaboration and its impact on foundations' work in Europe.

Why a partnership?

"If you're going to accomplish something lasting, it's good to get other people's ideas," believes William S. White of Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, who adds "a partnership was needed to implement what turned out to be a content-rich program." Antonella Ricci of Compagnia di San Paolo cites the need for a "critical mass of money, skills, resources and convening power" as a key incentive to enter in a large partnership. This is echoed by Franz Karl Prüller of ERSTE Stiftung, who stresses that "pooling of funds is positive, but even more important is the meeting of ideas and experiences, networks and contacts to create something bigger than its single parts." This joining of forces was made possible by a shared desire "to move from a group of foundations that were talking about ideas and experience in the area of youth empowerment to actually doing something new together," says Walter Veirs of Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Collaboration can offer greater scope for action and a long-term approach to create sustainable change. YEPP Programme Director Angelika Krüger believes that "partnership allows small foundations to create synergy with larger foundations for more complex and long-term projects." This is confirmed by Pia Gerber of Freudenberg Stiftung: "Our foundation is really small, so partnership was crucial to our having an impact." The learning process worked both ways, as Antonella Ricci stresses that she "learned a lot from the smaller foundations in YEPP, because some of them worked mostly on youth projects and were very skilled in that field." The give-and-take nature of YEPP is also mentioned by Debbie Pippard of Barrow Cadbury Trust: "YEPP allowed us to find out what was happening in the rest of Europe and to share our UK experience." Making the basic case for partnership, Piero Gastaldo of Compagnia di San Paolo says "each partner has to feel that the cooperation is useful in the sense that you are achieving more together than you would alone."

Working together in the long term

Over the years, YEPP's innovative model of partnership developed its own working dynamics as members experienced the rewards and challenges of sustainable collaboration. A key element of the partnership was equality. For Tim Verbist of Evens Foundation, "that was an innovative thing about YEPP – both the Mott Foundation and Compagnia di San Paolo, which are very big, powerful foundations, worked together on an equal basis with smaller foundations like us." Debate and exchange of views created a constructive atmosphere, as described by Micheline Mardulyn of Fondation Bernheim: "Sometimes you have to abandon one of your convictions, but probably it needed to be abandoned." Peter Evans of the OECD, one of the original partners in YEPP, also insists that "if you join a group venture you are inevitably going to have to give up some freedom of decision-making."



Inevitably for a long-term programme, changes of membership and personnel presented a different type of challenge. "In some cases there were strong personalities entering and exiting; sometimes those bring creative tension, but other times, it can bring almost destructive tension," says William S. White. Together with equality, trust has been an important binding element to work through differences between partners. Micheline Mardulyn insists that this "trust between us could not have been built without face-to-face meetings." But attending such international meetings can also be very demanding for smaller foundations, as pointed out by Pia Gerber: "Sometimes European cooperation is easier for bigger foundations because they have the personnel."



Reaping the benefits: collective results and achievements

A key advantage of the partnership has been the solid European dimension it provided to local initiatives. As Debbie Pippard points out, this contributed to the overall achievements of the programme: “Having that kind of European level link gives legitimacy and status to local activities.” YEPP’s focus on community empowerment also brought innovative methods to the European context and inspired partners to develop new approaches. In Germany, Pia Gerber says that “YEPP was a prototype for a Federal Ministry of Education programme called ‘learning at your pace’, a national programme designed for partnerships of public authorities and foundations at the local level.” From Evens Foundation’s Buurtschatten model (“treasures of the neighbourhood”) to Freudenberg Stiftung’s “One Square Kilometer of Education” programme, the YEPP experience has inspired a number of innovative community initiatives in the field.



YEPP has also had a significant impact on the wider foundations’ landscape in Europe. As former NEF Managing Director Raymond Georis puts it: “I think YEPP has been a training ground for a lot of foundations that now find it quite normal to see things in European terms.” This assessment is backed by Pia Gerber: “I think you can take YEPP as a model for cooperation and visibility of the foundation sector.” In terms of advocacy and the promotion of youth participation and community empowerment at various policy levels, there have been mixed results: “This seems to have worked to a degree at the local and regional levels, but not at the national and European levels,” says Piero Gastaldo, who adds that “at the regional level, the project has produced so much interest that local administrations in two different Italian regions have asked us to help them start their own projects.”

Lessons learnt from 10 years of youth and community empowerment

A key lesson that can be drawn from YEPP after ten years is the vindication of its long-term approach. “We were able to demonstrate that holistic and systematic approaches to youth empowerment, pursued over longer periods of time, make sense and work,” says Walter Veirs. Debbie Pippard encourages potential partners to “think about the length of time it takes to form a partnership, the length of time you need to fund it in order to get the juice out of it at the end.” For William S. White, this is an immutable law of community empowerment: “I once had a programme officer who came out of New York community organising say to me: ‘Never forget that it takes a minimum of five years to start a community group.’”

At a more conceptual level, a key lesson for initiatives in the field is the need for concrete outcomes and measurable achievements. This can be a challenge when using a long-term, process-oriented and holistic approach. For Peggy Sailer of NEF, “the YEPP model is something that is pretty open, and to link something as broad as that with a specific agenda and concrete outcomes is difficult.” William S. White admits that “YEPP is really trying to embed youth and youth-serving organisations into the decision-making process at the local level and that’s hard to measure.” In this respect, the involvement of the public sector is seen by many partners as the key to sustainability. According to Micheline Mardulyn, “the centres where the programmes are going very well are those where the local authorities were involved immediately.”

With regards to the partner foundations, one of the main lessons after 10 years of YEPP has been the sharing of ideas and transfer of knowledge made possible by a long-term, international collaboration. Tim Verbist believes this has been YEPP’s greatest contribution and added value for the partners involved: “There are so many good practices and there is so much knowledge within reach; YEPP helped us see that in Antwerp. We started to look around and to copy things that have proven successful in other places. The inspirational, motivational dimension of YEPP was the major lesson.”

Key messages

- Partnerships enable foundations to work on a greater scale and invest in long-term programmes.
- Equality and trust are necessary conditions for a successful and sustainable partnership.
- Youth and community empowerment, particularly within a transnational network, requires long-term commitment from partners in terms of funds and personnel.



Key Messages

10 Years of Youth and Community Empowerment

In ten years of youth and community empowerment, YEPP has developed a number of best practices and lessons learnt from its local and transnational activities. Below are some of the key messages the YEPP community would like to address to fellow practitioners and decision-makers.



General

- YEPP's Concept of Change works: when fully implemented, the YEPP model and principles create sustainable change in communities.
- A precondition for any change process is a strong perceived need for change and high motivation to bring it about.
- Youth and community empowerment require long-term commitment from partners in terms of funds and personnel, particularly within a transnational network.



Youth Empowerment

- Young people participate actively in creating sustainable change if opportunities for civic and community engagement are open to them.
- Young people know best what they need; local partners and municipalities should support them in making a difference
- Young people are key stakeholders for urban and rural regeneration plans and can provide creative and sustainable solutions.

Community Empowerment

- Participatory monitoring and evaluation help local stakeholders to take ownership of the change processes.
- Constant efforts to open decision-making structures to new members are required to maintain an inclusive approach to the needs of the community.
- Bottom-up mobilisation of citizens – among them young people - is particularly effective for empowering communities with fewer opportunities.

Partnership

- Trust, openness and good leadership are the essential ingredients of effective and successful partnerships.
- Long-term commitment of local actors and partners yields structural results.
- Cross-sectoral partnership implies a constant fine-tuning of common strategies and actions.
- It is never too early to start deepening the participation of institutional partners, in particular the public sector.
- Partnerships enable foundations and other funders to work on a greater scale and invest in longer-term programmes than they would on their own.





Evaluation

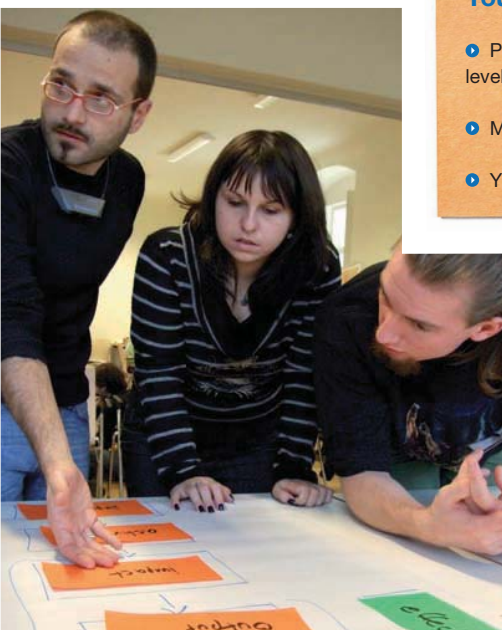
- Participatory planning and evaluation bring fragmented local actors together and create a framework for sustainable cooperation.
- Young people must be supported by solid continuous evaluation to learn from the process, improve organisational aspects and increase the impact of their actions.
- Operational plans must include a clear indication of the resources and level of individual commitment required to implement the activities initiated by the group.

Skills and Inclusion

- Keeping an active core of young people involved over several years allows the more experienced ones to develop coaching skills and train younger peers.
- Targeted efforts and cooperation with local businesses are necessary to transfer skills from voluntary projects to the labour market.
- Social investment funds managed by young people, such as the Youth Bank model, develop their skills while creating change for the whole community.

Youth Participation and Advocacy

- Politicians and decision-makers are keen to give visibility and support to youth projects with high levels of participation by young people.
- Municipalities can gain expertise and public support by consulting young people.
- YEPP's approach and principles help local decision-makers to design youth policies



Transnational dimension

- The work at transnational level is an inspirational and motivational dimension for the work at local level; it provides a good vehicle for capacity-building and learning from each other.
- Transnational contacts and exchanges bring invaluable ideas and good practices that would not be developed separately, while strengthening participants' self-confidence and self-initiative.
- Engaging regularly in transnational events raises young people's awareness of racism and stimulates intercultural dialogue.
- Transnational work creates a European identity for local projects which opens doors and attracts new people to the local process.

Challenges

- Young people facing serious educational and social challenges are hard to reach and involve in a sustainable manner but can benefit greatly from incremental participation.
- Bottom-up mobilisation of young people and citizens is particularly effective for empowering communities in post-conflict environments.
- Dialogue with schools and educators is a fundamental part of community empowerment in disadvantaged areas.
- For establishing effective cross-sectoral partnerships of a relevant scope the private sector needs to be brought in as a full partner.



For more information on YEPP and its activities, visit the YEPP website: www.yepp-community.org

