



The 2001 report of activities of Youth Action for Peace

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About This Report of Activities

The 2001 Report of Activities of Youth Action for Peace (YAP) has been drafted having in mind the fact that YAP is orientated towards young people, local communities, and works with national and international institutions, governmental and non-governmental structures, mass-media and any person that considers the philosophy of YAP, applying the principle of transparency. YAP feels it is responsible in front of its main beneficiaries and community, in general, towards its partners and grant makers.

This report is available in printed form as well as in its on-line electronic version at the following address: yapis@sx4all.be. It pictures basic information about YAP, its programs and activities ran during 2001, the social context of these activities, the financial resources and their allocation as well as the most outstanding achievements at international level.

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Abbreviation: YAP

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Strategic Directions

This chapter speaks about YAP's long-term strategy, its vision and mission, fields of action and objectives. It also relates briefly on the history of the organization and its most important successes so far.

"Youth Action for Peace (YAP) is an international movement which aims for societies of justice, peace and human solidarity. It struggles against the different forms of violence, exploitation, injustice and exclusion; against networks of ideological, religious, sexist, political, cultural and economic oppression and imbalance of natural surroundings. It supports all those, women or men, who want to take their destiny into their own hands so as to organise collectively a responsible and liberating society."
(Preamble of the Constitution)

YAP was born after the First World War (in 1923) in France and Germany, under the name Christian Movement for Peace (until 1994), in order to work towards peace and reconciliation between countries formerly at war, particularly with the younger generations. Over the years the movement has always retained its original vocation of striving to avoid conflict by helping young people to get to know each other, but it has also moved with the times. Thus since the Second World War YAP has taken on other basic aims according to changing contexts. In particular, the movement has increasingly focused upon the combat against social exclusion and the support of people in their struggle for freedom and self-determination.

Activities

This chapter presents short descriptions of our activities through the world and the main achievements.

EVS Palestine: Working for Peace and Tolerance With the Local Community of Hebron

Venue: Hebron, Palestine

Dates: 15 February – 15 February 2001

With the support of the Youth Programme of the European Commission

The project was the result of several activities organised by YAP and its Palestinian branch International Palestinian Youth League in the last few years. It was the follow-up of 2 EVS multilateral projects organised in 1999 and 2000, as well as the outcome of 2 networking and training seminars organised as support measure in Italy and in Jordan in 1999.

The EVS project gathered 6 European volunteers in Hebron. The volunteers came from Germany (1), Holland (1), France (3) and Italy (1).

The hosting projects were all working with young people or children, and the main aim of the project was to enable both European volunteers and young Palestinians to benefit from an intercultural experience and from a sharing of knowledge.

Another objective for the hosting co-ordinating organisation was to enhance the cooperation with organisations abroad, but also between themselves. As Palestinians have considerable difficulties to move freely, the role of the EVS volunteers as a direct link between different organisations was considerable.

The 6 volunteers were placed in 4 local hosting organisations: the Rehabilitation Committee, the Palestinian Child Art Center, the Al-Isham Charitable Society, and IPYL. Apart from their activities in their own projects, they had the opportunity to participate to the IPYL activities and training courses. By working side-by-side with other local volunteers, the volunteers were exposed to the Palestinian culture and habits.

Originally the contract was for 7 volunteers, but due to the political circumstances, we could only send 6 volunteers, therefore there was still some money available on the budget to pay for an extension of 6 months for the German volunteer. A prolongation of 6 months was therefore requested (and granted) for the project. The other 5 volunteers left their project 1 month before the end of their contract, as they started to feel the stress of being in a country like Palestine for a prolonged period of time.

During their voluntary service, a midterm evaluation was conducted with them in Palestine by the project coordinator and the International Secretary of YAP. This was deemed necessary to ensure the physical and mental well-being of the volunteers. Four months after the return of the volunteers, a final evaluation was conducted with them in France. In general, the volunteers considered their voluntary service as positive.

As a result of the project, a new project was set up for the year 2002, hosting a total of 8 volunteers in various cities in Palestine and Israel (see activity plan 2002).

YAP and the Voluntary Service: Reflection on Our Actions and Practices

Venue: Frankfurt, Germany

Dates: 26 February - 4 March 2001

With the support of the Youth programme of the European Commission

For several years, YAP has been developing many voluntary service activities in the field of local development, intercultural learning, social insertion citizenship,..., while it has been working with the more specific European Voluntary Service programme for 5 years now.

With the upcoming of the new YOUTH programme and the integration of Eastern Europe, the different partners involved in the programme found it important to take some time to reflect on the actions implemented and on the work and the cooperation in the frame of the EVS programme in the past few years.

This seminar therefore had the following aims:

- Reflect on YAP values and objectives regarding Voluntary Service.
- Evaluate the former EVS projects in order to improve our cooperation
- Exchange experiences, analyse and homogenise as much as possible the practices of work of the different partners.
- Integrate new eligible countries in EVS
- Have an overview of the new YOUTH programme and possibilities of project funding.

The activities implemented were:

- Introduction to Voluntary Service, EVS and the YOUTH programme.
- Evaluation of EVS projects based on testimonies from different partners (Sending Organisation, Hosting Organisation, Volunteer,...), in the European Union, in Eastern Europe (pre-accession countries) and in Third countries.
- EVS short-term & work with disadvantaged people evaluation.
- Recommendations on the EVS programme (and LTV programmes in general).
- Recommendations on the EVS short-term programme.

The group of participants was quite heterogenous and complementary. It was composed of sending and hosting coordinators, former volunteers and social workers coming from the European Union (16), pre-accession countries (4), as well as Mexico (1), Russia (1), Ukraine (1) and Palestine (1). The preparatory team consisted of 3 active members of YAP, all coming from the EU.

As a direct outcome, a report was produced with recommendations/ guidelines for Short term and Long Term EVS, as can be seen in the overview of activities implemented. This document is the basis of the work of YAP and its branches in these programmes now.

Organisational Management and Fundraising Seminar

Venue: European Youth Centre, Strasbourg, France

1-8 April 2001

Supported by the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe

With the changing priorities of the donor organisations towards youth and voluntary work, youth organisations have been left with less resources to be able to run their activities, thus leaving the new and/or small youth organisation with having difficulties in promoting its political ideals. This study session aimed in giving perspectives and skills to the participants, and thus their sending organisations to find alternative solutions.

The basic philosophy behind the structure of Youth Action for Peace is to create a soft-bed in which rather vague ideas can actually develop into something concrete: allowing young people to realise the projects they have in mind. The activities developed in this way form the backbone of YAP in general, with the main idea to promote Peace and human rights through concrete action.

As the result of several training sessions on project management, the practical organisation of different projects seems to be well assured, with YAP as an international movement growing steadily, considering both the number of young people involved and the number of activities organised per year.

However, as a result of this, the need for some organisational backup is also growing. The study session on « Organisational Management and Fundraising » aimed at training a new generation on how to assist other young people to realise their projects.

The objectives of the study session were:

- To enable the participants to gain basic knowledge about organisational management and fundraising.
- To get familiar with concrete methods and tools of analysing their organisation and fundraising techniques and ethics
- To get acquainted with the political implications of fundraising and the different philosophical points of view concerning fundraising
- To enable them to develop practical solutions concerning the organisational and financial problems in their respective organisations
- To improve and intensify the co-operation between youth exchange organisations.

The participants were selected among the active members of the involved organisations, both existing YAP branches as well as partner organisations. There were 32 participants present (including 5 prep-team members), ideally gender balanced 16 female – 16 male, coming from 16 different countries: the European Union (16), pre-accession countries (7), and other countries (10).

EVS Short Term Workcamps 2001

Venue: Different countries in the European Union

April-December 2001

With the support of the Youth programme of the European Commission

The project was to involve young disadvantaged people into the work camps that have been organised for many years now by YAP the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations (the Alliance) and Service Civil International (SCI). This short term EVS project is being organised in close co-operation between the three networks.

While the EVS programme was originally set up for all young people, it has been noticed in the recent experiences with this programme, that in practice young disadvantaged people are very little involved in it. YAP wished to address this issue by including them into our work camps. The main goal of the project was therefore to give young disadvantaged people a first experience in doing a voluntary service away from their homes, with the final aim to involve them in long term EVS projects, as organized by YAP and other organizations. For this reason, the project should be seen as a support measure for long term EVS.

The project includes a total of 150 young disadvantaged people from all over Europe, of which 50 from YAP. They will participate in the short-term voluntary service activities organized by YAP, the Alliance and SCI between April and December 2001.

Due to several reasons (among others the late arrival of the contract), it became clear towards the end of the project that we had not be able to fill all places of the project. An extension was therefore requested (and granted) until the end of July 2002. So far, 33 volunteers were sent by YAP branches and 36 were hosted. All of them came from the EU.

The importance of understanding and underlining the difficulties encountered by the volunteers participating in Short Term EVS is explicit to explaining the aims of our work. We deal with those who are implicitly excluded from most training programmes, and who might not ever have access to the world of solidarity action.

Those who have become through this programme our volunteers are either facing the difficulties of an immigrated family, or maybe the difficulties of no family at all. Generally they are unemployed and probably come from difficult social context where their possibilities are hardly equal to everybody else's, where their neighbourhood is similar to a ghetto and where their family only contributes to making things harder culturally, socially, economically. They have probably endured violence or have mistreated themselves by falling into drugs addiction. They are those who people stare at because they are somehow different or because their disabilities attract our attention.

The programme encountered 3 types of difficulties:

The first one is connected to content: It has been proved to be very difficult to find participants fitting the profile mainly because of a question of reliability and trust. The persons who perfectly fit the category of disadvantaged young people difficultly feel safe in going to such a project. It has also happened that once we found the volunteers we did not manage to convince them because they would have had to admit their disability. In working with disadvantaged young people this can also be a problem. This is one of the reasons why we have not fill in all vacancies.

The third type of problems is connected to the shape, that is the time gap between the beginning of the project and the official time of approval and then the consequent funds reimbursement.

The forth type of problems is connected to methodology. We have not had the chance to meet all the responsables involved in the programme, and we felt the need of going through training regarding dealing with disadvantaged young people. Sometimes, it seemed that a bit more experience in this field might have helped avoid some situations that at that time seem at least dramatic.

EVS in Mexico: Democratic Participation in Local Communities

Venue: different cities in Mexico

Dates: 5 June – 5 December 2001

With the support of the Youth Programme of the European Commission

This project was the follow up of several activities organised by Youth Action for Peace and Nuestra Tierra in the past few years. These projects included several multilateral EVS projects, as well as youth exchanges and more recently a training seminar for youth leaders in Europe and Latin America.

The project hosted a total of 3 volunteers from the EU in different cities in Mexico. They worked on different topics and in close cooperation with the respective local communities. The first two volunteers worked in Puerto Vallarta and helped running a research project linking sustainable development to local development. The last volunteer worked with SEDEPAC, an organisation based in Mexico city, and she worked in a local project with indigenous women.

The volunteers in this project have only returned recently. A final evaluation with them is foreseen together with the volunteers of the project described below. A midterm evaluation was organised by the Mexican coordinating organisation, and the International Secretary of YAP visited the volunteers in October. The preliminary results of the project are quite positive.

EVS in Mexico: Turtles, Paper and Voluntary Service

Venue: Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

Dates: 1 July 2001 – 1 April 2002

With the support of the Youth Programme of the European Commission

The project hosts a total of 5 volunteers from the EU in three different projects in or near Puerto Vallarta in Mexico. They work on different topics and in close cooperation with the respective local communities. The first two volunteers work on one of the longest running projects of Nuestra Tierra, the turtle preservation programme. In this project, the volunteers are assisting the hosting organisation in raising awareness for the importance of protecting the natural environment, both with the local population and the visiting (international) tourists. The second project also hosts two volunteers, who work on paper recycling. With this project Nuestra Tierra wishes to show people how to protect the environment, and to develop their creative skills at the same time. The last project hosts only one volunteer, who will help the organisation in the promotion of (local and national) volunteering. The idea for this project was conceived as a contribution to the United Nations International Year of Volunteering (IYV2001).

Most of the volunteers in this project are still in their projects in Mexico. A final evaluation with them is foreseen together with the volunteers of the project described above, upon return of all volunteers. A midterm evaluation was organised by the Mexican coordinating organisation, and the International Secretary of YAP visited the volunteers in October. The preliminary results of the project are quite positive, even though it is too early at this stage to draw any final conclusions.

Arte Diem- Fascism Oppressing Art, Art Undertake Fascism

Venue: Oradea, Romania

Dates: 23 July – 12 August

With the support of the Youth Programme of the European Commission

Eastern Europe passes through a troubled period of time. Having escaped from communism, but affected by the profound economic crises, people are looking for a compensation to their difficult situations; they are looking for a so-called ideal or purpose to adhere at. The last elections in Romania have proved again how close the danger of neo-fascism is.

“Arte Diem- fascism oppressing art, art undertake fascism” was the outcome of a similar youth exchange which took place in the summer of 2000 in Hungary. The participants of this exchange stayed in contact with each other through mail, email, internet, and even personal meetings. Through these contacts, some of them decided that they would like to organise another youth exchange to give other young people the chance to get a similar experience. Some of them have become quite active in the international movement of YAP, and they have asked YAP to assist them to achieve this.

This youth exchange brought together 35 young people in the city of Oradea, Romania, coming from the European Union (23), pre-accession countries (11) as well as from Russia (1). They have learnt that the danger of neo-fascism does exist but it has to be undertaken. They worked at a holistic performance learning that every one of them is different but every one can find a place in the integrating project, realising that unity in diversity is not just a vane slogan. The preparatory team consisted of 5 active members of YAP, 3 coming from the EU, and 2 from pre-accession countries.

One of the objectives was to create a fertile atmosphere for young people from different parts of Europe as well as from the local community to interact, live together, learn from each other, and plan together different activities. We think that this objective has been even overachieved. The diversity of the ethnical background of the participants was a strength of the international group of volunteers. They learnt about each other not only during a session or an international evening, but every day during every moment. They interacted in all the daily activities: eating, working, leisure etc. This way they passed on habits, traditions, words from their own language or country: an international and informal ongoing learning process!

For many of the participants the project gave the first opportunity to meet foreigners, to travel abroad or to manage and look for him/herself away from the cosy home. This meant a lot for the own development of the volunteers as ongoing modelling of their character in the spirit of the new and modern Europe: "Unity in Diversity" Their horizons have widened, they have created life long friends not only among the participants but also with young people from Oradea.

After the success of the ArteDiem project in Oradea in 2001, the participants decided to organise another edition (the 4th one) of this project. YAP will encourage the participants of this youth exchange to continue the effort, and to organise the next edition of ArteDiem in another country (Spain, Austria or Portugal). To this effect, a follow up meeting will be organised very soon involving and drawing up a preparatory team and the international secretariat of YAP. In this meeting the youth exchange will also be evaluated another time.

Study Visit to South East Europe

Venue: Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia

Dates: 3-10 September 2001

With the support of the Youth Programme of the European Commission

This short study visit gathered 6 active members of YAP during 8 days who will visit three countries in South East Europe: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia. The participants came from Hungary, Romania, Belgium, The UK, France and Germany. The practical preparation of the study visit was done by two of the participants: the International Secretary of YAP and an active member of the international movement of YAP, who has been active in the movement for many years now.

The study visit started in Croatia with a general introduction to the programme and the participants, as well as a discussion on the strategy to follow in each country. Peter Tholstrup, a Dane in charge of SEEYN (the co-ordination of voluntary service organisations in the region) gave us an introduction to the situation of the organisations and of the region in general. We then visited Volunteer Centre Zagreb, Anti-war Campaign (also known as ARK) and finally we tried to have a meeting with Suncokret but with no success. We tried again just before our departure at the end of the study-visit, still with no success.

After the visit of Croatia, the group split in two parts for one day: one going to Banja Luka, in the part of Bosnia called Republika Srpska, on the other one to Jajce, where both groups met in the evening before moving to Sarajevo the day after. We visited an organisation called OKC (Youth Communication Centre) in Banja Luka, a centre for education and recreation that was created by a German organisation in Jajce, and a young NGO called SAY YES in Sarajevo. We also met again Peter Tholstrup, with whom we had a first evaluation of our visit.

After going through Bosnia in different buses (this is something to remember!) we arrived in Belgrade where our main objective was to meet the organisation Young Researchers of Serbia / Voluntary Service Serbia. We had also planned to visit three other organisations – Women in Black, YU Youth Work-camp and Sdravo da Ste – but we arrived too late on a Saturday evening and could not reach anyone on Sunday. So we could only meet YRS/VSS.

Follow up

Croatia

In terms of exchanges of volunteers, it is a bit too early to have a proper evaluation as the activity is low between September and May. We will see at the end of 2002 season whether there are some improvements. A project of centralised EVS with South Eastern European countries is now being developed and it includes the participation of VCZ. Some representatives of the Croatian organisations should be present at YAP Congress which took place in February 2002. We also had the occasion to meet some members of the organisations during some meetings and activities that took place in Europe between September and now.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

We can say it is more or less the same as Croatia. It is too early to have a proper evaluation of the exchanges of volunteers. We will see at the end of 2002 season whether there are some improvements. A project of centralised EVS with South Eastern European countries is now being developed and it includes the participation of Bosnian organisations. Some representatives of the Bosnian organisations should be present at YAP Congress which took place in February 2002. We also had the occasion to meet

some members of the organisations during some meetings and activities that took place in Europe between September and now.

Serbia

We can say it is more or less the same as Croatia or Bosnia, although the contacts and co-operation with YRS/VSS had already been more developed. It is too early to have a proper evaluation of the exchanges of volunteers. We will see at the end of 2002 season whether there are some improvements. A project of centralised EVS with South Eastern European countries is now being developed and it includes the participation of YRS/VSS. Some representatives of the organisation should be present at YAP Congress which took place in February 2002. We also had the occasion to meet some members of the organisation during some meetings and activities that took place in Europe between September and now. We have also decided not to focus only on YRS/VSS but also to establish relations with the organisations we could not meet.

EVS Fighting Against Racism and Xenophobia

Venue: different countries in the European Union as well as Central and Eastern Europe

Dates: 1 October 2001 – 1 October 2002

With the support of the Youth Programme of the European Commission

EVS fighting against racism and xenophobia aims at following and assisting young volunteers from all EU-member states on creating a profound statement on how they feel touched by the problem of racism and xenophobia. The project is the development of a personal point of view on a topic by one or a number of young volunteers working on a specific theme, which they have chosen. Possible themes must be concerned with the general topic of racism and xenophobia and have to do with actual persons actually or in danger of experiencing racism and xenophobia, like immigrants and refugees on all levels of their lives in the European Union.

The project therefore wishes to create a wider European awareness that human rights are equal for all and that misunderstanding this simple knowledge will unstoppably lead back to the ages of cruel confrontation and egoistic dominance over others from which our civilisation has grown up since short.

For this aim the volunteers permanently have the possibility to exchange their experiences during the project by making use of the internet, collect and present them to a public audience.

From the beginning of the project on the focus has been put on sustainable results. For succeeding in this, representatives from communities and other public institutions are being approached to present the results also before them. To create further interest in the topic the project will be concluded by a presentation co-organised by a number of interested volunteers.

This presentation will be an evaluation meeting including workshops, where the personal projects will be presented, round table discussions and a final press conference.

As can be noticed, this project is still ongoing. A total of 14 volunteers coming from the EU (10) and the pre-accession countries (4) are currently participating. During the midterm evaluation that took place in January 2002 in Madrid, the participants came up with the idea to organise a big conference about their experiences at the end of their voluntary service. This is supposed to take place in Berlin, and is included in the plan of action of YAP for 2002. We are following this project with great curiosity!

Voluntary Service as a Tool for Community and Social Development

Venue: Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

19-25 October 2001

With the support of the Youth Programme of the European Commission

As volunteers can sometimes act as a support to raise the profile of the local NGOs with the local community, (European) voluntary service can be considered to have a long term social impact in a local community, apart from the impact on the minds of the (EVS) volunteers. To make this happen, however, it is essential that organisations are enabled to identify projects that are arising from a direct need of the local community itself. The concept and use of voluntary service must therefore have a clear reason for the local community, that can have a direct impact on both their (social) development and the development of the volunteer him/herself.

YAP as an international movement, which embraces national or sub- national regional organizations that organize local projects, wished to explore the possibilities to integrate EVS volunteers into its actions of social and community development, as well as its challenges. The objectives of this (training) seminar were therefore:

- To develop the capacity of the hosting organisations to act for community and social development.
- To promote voluntary service as a tool for social development through projects that are realised in local communities by the different member organisations of YAP.
- To promote active citizenship for the participants in voluntary service programmes, to make them feel responsible and aware for what is happening in our societies , as well as to promote the fact that volunteers can conceive and carry out projects towards a common social harmony.

The 24 participants came from both the EU (12) and Latin America (12). The preteam consisted of several active members of YAP, coming from both Europe and Latin America.

As a way to get some personal opinions about the event, every body participated in the final evaluation that the prep team presented. This evaluation was a graphic in which every participant had to write a symbol to express the personal opinion about some points in the event such as the lodging, the food, the atmosphere, the contents, the timing and the prep- team. The results were very positive and the participants gave some personal comments in the plenary session.

As one of the results of this Seminar some recommendations were made to the international movement of YAP in order to present them to the CD (Directors Committee):

1. Projects should be an output of the local community based on their needs; active involvement of the locals should be encouraged to facilitate sustainable development.
2. Communication between hosting and sending organizations has to be improved in order to ensure the best possible preparation of volunteers.
3. Voluntary service organizations need more promotion of themselves and of voluntary service to obtain more and better involvement within local community and more recognition from authorities.
4. The multiplier effect should be emphasized (done) by all parties involved in voluntary service.

Training for Trainers

Venue: Sevilla, Spain

8-16 December 2001

Supported by the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe

As the result of several training sessions on project management the practical organization of different projects within Youth Action for Peace seems to be well assured, with the international movement growing steadily, considering both the number of young people involved and the number of activities organized per year. However, as a result of this, there was a growing need for pedagogical, educational and organizational backup. YAP is therefore planning a series of activities to meet these needs including this training for trainers and a study session on organizational management. The main aim was thus to train a new generation on how to assist other young people to realize their projects.

Objectives

- to enable a new generation of active members to take their role in the organisation, both on a national and international level
- to provide young trainers with a practical and theoretical framework for their training activities
- to create a database within YAP of young people who can be part of a preparatory team for training activities

A total of 20 participants took part in this training, 15 from the EU, 2 from pre-accession countries and 3 from Mexico, Serbia and Algeria. The team consisted of 4 active members of YAP, all coming from the EU.

The training as such was evaluated positively by both participants and trainers, but it is too soon at the time of writing this report to evaluate its results on a longer term. We are expecting that most of the participants in the training will become active in YAP and their sending organisations as trainers. Some of them have already started!

More detailed content reports can be obtained at

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