

[Objectives]

School of life

Creative training and aesthetic education – integral part of the work of all institutions involved – are to promote comprehensively the ability of the young adults

- to perceive with their senses
- to recognise sensuously and conceptually
- and to depict their perceptions and impressions
feelings and findings.

YouthArt and cultural work is to be conducted as a school of life.

The educational and qualification objectives in brief:

- imparting basic and key qualifications (linguistic competence, explorative curiosity, empathy, orientation, self-organisation, thinking in project connections)
- developing a reflective social and personal identity that is able to withstand disappointments
- against social disadvantaging as well as cultural and political discrimination

Against social disadvantaging as well as cultural and political discrimination

Special attention and efforts of the institutions connected in the Network should be geared towards the disadvantaged young people and social flashpoints within the respective communities. The Network is trying to include especially such young adults into the European volunteer service who are in danger of becoming marginalised by society. The inter-cultural artistic work of the institutions should have an impact on the community and contribute especially to dismantling xenophobia and racism.

The 'compensatory' and socio-cultural objectives in brief:

developing access strategies for disadvantaged adolescents and young adults, combining creative training with measures orientating towards and preparing for the job, identifying the arts as a third place of inter- or trans-cultural meeting.

Community work: improving the socio-cultural "image" and climate of social flashpoints

Inter-cultural European experience

The exchange within the European Volunteer Service is to challenge young adults to live with a foreign language and culture, a strange community and an unknown institution and to empower them through care, qualification and support to accept this challenge and learn in doing so. The own forms of culture and life should no longer be accepted as a given fact of life but should rather be open for reflection.

The objectives of inter-cultural European education in brief:

openness and tolerance, respect and freedom in dealing with traditions, ability to bear conflict, creativity in inventing new cultural forms of presentation, manner of dealing with one another and an organisation, knowledge of foreign languages and countries, flexibility and mobility.

Synergy among the institutions involved

The presence of European volunteers in the work of the individual institutions is to contribute to the development of these institutions themselves. Their presence extends the inter-cultural and European nature of these institutions by an important aspect: by dealing with the

volunteers forces, the projects to look beyond the local and national restraints. In an intensive cooperation with one another, the projects are to develop standards, forms of working together and communication that rightly deserve the name 'European'.

The development objectives in brief:

Intensive exchange in the area of practical, conceptual and evaluative work, Europe as a local experience – local presence of Creative Cooperations as a European network, impact of the work on the cultural and educational policy situation of Europe and the European labour market.

[Evaluation]

Parameters of successful work

20 partners have come together in the Network called Creative Cooperations, in order to fulfil their own assignment: to work artistically with disadvantaged young people in the European Volunteer Service in a manner that is oriented towards the community. In doing so, the network has developed its own tailor-made standards, its own forms of working together and communicating. It is on this basis that the projects of Creative Cooperations have been working together continuously for four years now. More than 40 volunteers have been exchanged over this period of time. Many of them have used their time as a volunteer as a stepping-stone, they have found a job or are undertaking further training. Five participants alone are availing of the Future Capital Grant.

Departure and opening up

In most cases, the involvement in the Volunteer Service of the Network of Creative Cooperations is not a component of a previously planned career for the young volunteers but rather the adventure of departing and opening up in more senses of the word than one: to depart for an unknown cultural and working world, opening up the world of their own lives, their habits and old social relationships. These departures have an existential dimension and are thus usually characterised by crisis (this, however, has nothing to do with 'crisis pedagogics'). These critical phases offer an enormous potential. At the same time, the institutions and the Network bear a special responsibility in this respect. The Panel of May 1999 showed clearly how necessary and how fruitful an intensive exchange is amongst those responsible for the projects.

Being able to depict one's life

Amongst the established working formats within the Network of the European Volunteer Service, there are the preparatory and follow-up seminars with the volunteers. These seminars serve especially to develop and train narration, depiction and communication skills, with which the volunteers are able to present their experience – the development of an identity is connected to a high degree to being able to depict one's own biographical sequences. At the seminars, the volunteers of one cycle have an exchange and the 'old' volunteers answer the questions of the newcomers. Just how many of them acted in their new role of the 'experienced' after six months or a whole year showed the learning progress in many cases and even dramatic progress in some.

The volunteer reports required as well as the volunteer magazine called POINT MELTING POT also serve the purpose of developing forms of depiction and communication. Quite a few of the volunteers used their creative and artistic experience in designing their interim and final reports. Even so, not all volunteers became aware of the fact that this was anything but a 'bureaucratic exercise'.

Representing the sense of the case

The significance of youth information events like the Panel of May 1999 for the volunteers involved was of great importance. You could actually feel the degree in which the work on forms of depiction was changed positively and intensively by the fact that the young people really expected an audience. Motivation and the perspective of dealing with one's own experience as a volunteer changed dramatically. The own biographical experience was embedded in the sense of community oriented, artistic youth work and the youth exchange. The task was to impart and represent this sense – not without criticism – to the outside world.

And to see the drive and elegance with which almost every volunteer stood up to this tasks in the Panel was one of the most impressive experiences at this event.

Synergy effects

The common discussions among the European Volunteer Service with regard to a public event eventually involved those responsible for the projects in a debate that went far beyond the issues of the actual exchange of young people and the European Volunteer Service. These talks dealt with the common goals, the different working conditions of the various institutions. Thus, with the help of the Panel, the Creative Cooperations projects moved a step closer to a farther-reaching objective that is to intensify and – last but not least – to Europeanise the practical, conceptual and evaluative cooperation amongst one another. The initiative called THE HOUSE suggested to the European Commission by Creative Cooperations in the summer of 1999 is an expression of this very development.