



European  
Commission

YOUTH IN ACTION PROGRAMME

Focus on:

# Youth Volunteering

*European  
good practice  
projects*



Youth in Action  
Programme

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**Androulla Vassiliou**  
*Commissioner for Education, Culture,  
Multilingualism and Youth*



The European Award Ceremony held on 17 May 2011 in Antwerp brought together young people who had taken part in the European Voluntary Service projects featured in this brochure. Three of them were presented with awards by Commission President José Manuel Barroso, Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou, and Member of the European Parliament Georgios Papanikolaou.

# European voluntary service for a more inclusive, innovative and global society

**V**olunteering promotes solidarity and social inclusion, Europe's core values. It gives people the opportunity to build knowledge, skills and social networks — stimulating personal, social and professional development.

Some 100 million people of different age groups are currently working as volunteers across Europe, dedicating their time and skills to give something back to the community. It is to highlight their work and to encourage others to follow their example that the European Commission made 2011 the *European Year of Volunteering*.

Since 1996, the EU has promoted voluntary work by young people across Europe and beyond through the European Voluntary Service (EVS), which is part of the "Youth in Action" programme. The EVS, which celebrates its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2011, has so far helped 50 000 young Europeans to become volunteers.

"For me, it's about taking on a challenge and overcoming my own barriers", says Ingrid from Austria, who did her EVS in Greece. I think these words epitomise the value placed on volunteering by young people.

The EVS scheme is also being showcased through our "Youth on the Move" initiative, which I launched in September 2010.

Young people who take part in the EVS receive training and support to prepare them for their specific volunteering role. The skills that they acquire are recorded in a "Youthpass" certificate.

The experience they gain in meeting and working with people from different countries and cultural backgrounds opens their eyes to other ways of life which can have a lifelong impact on them. Volunteering can also improve people's job prospects; employers value skills such as the ability to work in a team, to communicate effectively in a multicultural environment and to be able to speak foreign languages.

The EVS is open to all young people from 18 to 30. By working to help others, they often discover things about themselves that they didn't know, as well as developing new skills. Indeed, most young people come back from voluntary work with greater self-confidence and a fresh outlook on life.

I hope we can inspire many more young people to volunteer and help shape a selfless European society which is more inclusive, innovative and global.



**Androulla Vassiliou**  
Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth

**“I think the European Voluntary Service project at the Youth for Environment (YEE) is perfect for people with initiative, who want to learn a lot and constantly ask questions.”  
(Małgorzata, 27)**

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Czech Republic

Hosting organisation:  
Youth and Environment Europe  
[www.ecn.cz/yee](http://www.ecn.cz/yee)

Sending organisations:  
Angelus Silesius House  
[www.silesius.org.pl](http://www.silesius.org.pl)  
Association of YWCA/YMCA of Latvia  
(IMKA Latvija)  
[www.imka.lv](http://www.imka.lv)

Activity dates:  
15/07/2008 – 30/06/2009  
(ca. 12 months)



 **POLAND:** Małgorzata, 27 years

 **LATVIA:** Beatrise, 20 years

 **CZECH REPUBLIC**



## ◀◀ WORKING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN TOULCUV DVUR, CZECH REPUBLIC

Małgorzata (27 years) from Poland spent a year (2008/09) as a volunteer at the Youth for Environment (YEE) headquarters in the Czech Republic, with another volunteer Beatrise (20 years) from Latvia.

Youth for Environment (YEE) is a network of 50 youth organisations working to protect the environment in some 28 countries in Europe. Sponsored by the Council of Europe it has its headquarters at the ecological centre Toulcuv Dvur, an old medieval stronghold in Prague. Its mission is to promote active citizenship among young people by organising a variety of projects in the field of nature protection. Set up some thirty years ago by young people it continues to be an organisation run entirely by people under 30.

Małgorzata's tasks at the centre were of two kinds: helping with the administration and taking part in the activities organised for the public. She helped by preparing in-house publications, updating the website, keeping in touch with member organisations and attending events organised by the Council of Europe. She started her year by taking part in the 2008 annual general meeting of YEE in Romania and completed it by preparing papers for the 2009 meeting in Spain. Her other activities were mainly devoted to organising workshops for children, helping out in a nearby kindergarten and participating in events such as a local fair and carnival.

Working in the office taught Małgorzata useful administrative skills and she learned a lot about graphic design and layout techniques. She became more confident in taking decisions and working in an international team. By getting involved with the local community she was able to learn Czech and acquire a deeper understanding of Czech culture. She practised her English and improved her intercultural competencies with the international community of YEE. She also learned a lot more about ways of protecting the environment and continued to work for YEE after finishing her European Voluntary Service project.

The YEE is an organisation for young people and thrives on the enthusiasm and fresh ideas brought to it each year by volunteers coming from different countries.

## GLOBAL SOCIETY

**“My European Voluntary Service project has had a twofold impact: it sought to arouse society to these issues, both locally and internationally, and it allowed me to learn and evolve as a person and as a citizen.” (Marisa, 25)**

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Germany

Hosting organisation:  
Stiftung für die Rechte zukünftiger  
Generationen  
[www.srzg.de](http://www.srzg.de)

Sending organisation:  
Associação para a Formação Profissional e  
Desenvolvimento do Montijo  
[www.pai.pt](http://www.pai.pt)

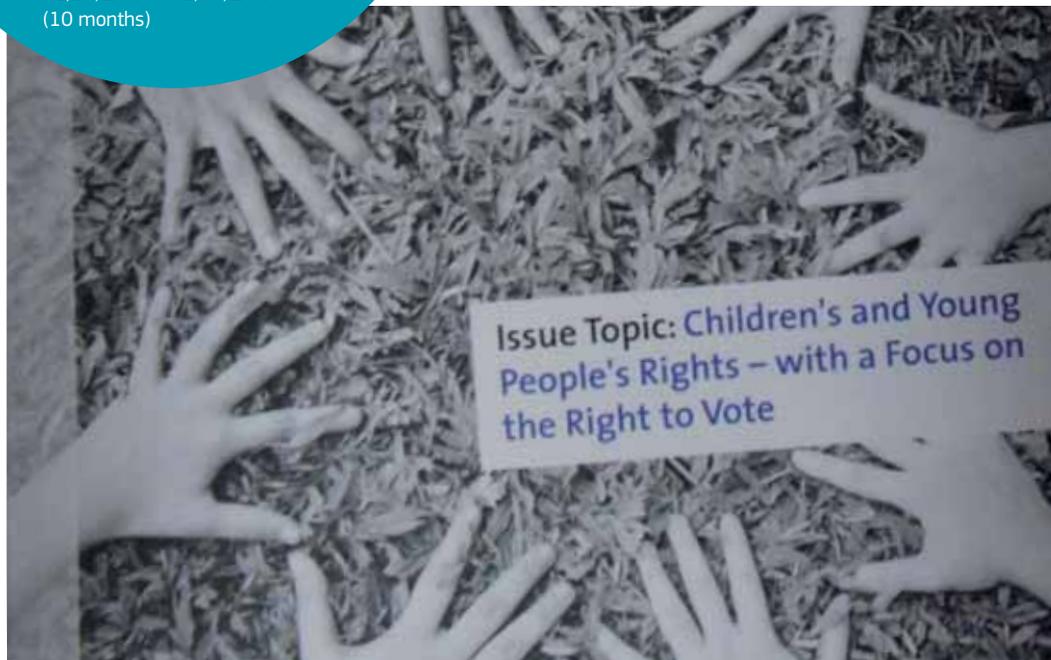
Activity dates:  
01/10/2009 – 31/07/2009  
(10 months)



**PORTUGAL:** Marisa, 25 years



**GERMANY**



## ◀◀ WORKING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION IN OBERURSEL, GERMANY

Marisa (25 years), a law graduate from Portugal, spent 10 months in 2009 as a volunteer in Germany, working on global responsibilities towards the next generation.

The hosting organisation was the Foundation for the Rights of Future Generations (FRFG), based in Oberursel, Germany, a research institute working on the links between science, politics and the business world. It focuses in particular on the rights of future generations and, with the help of research carried out by scientists working on interdisciplinary issues, it seeks to raise awareness of intergenerational justice in political circles. Its aim is to effect fundamental changes in society rather than simply carry out academic analyses. The network "Friends of FRFG" provides the Foundation's financial basis and ensures its independence.

Marisa was invited to choose a topic for the Foundation's publication *The Intergenerational Justice Review* (IGJR). Her choice was to launch a Europe-wide dialogue on the global responsibility of people living today for the well-being of future generations. She contacted authors for the issue and with the chief editor oversaw its editorial and lay-outing process. In addition, she took the initiative, on her return to Portugal, to organise an international conference on the topic in Lisbon. She was able to find partners in Portugal for the conference and raised additional funds to invite expert speakers. Additionally, she was invited to a second conference on the same subject in Versailles, France. An English version of the IGJR was widely distributed at conferences.

During her volunteering Marisa improved her English skills and was able to learn German. She developed extensive knowledge about intergenerational justice and took advantage of the opportunity to write her masters thesis on the topic. She developed a strong sense of initiative and entrepreneurship which she displayed in organising the international conference in Portugal. Her multicultural competencies were strengthened through working in an international environment. As a direct result of her time spent as a volunteer she was invited to advise a Portuguese political party on intergenerational issues.

The contribution made by Marisa, such as her work on the review and setting up the conference in Portugal, created a much larger public for the principles and work of the Foundation.

“WWF Greece’s mission is to conserve the rich biodiversity of Greece, to prevent and eventually to reverse environmental degradation, seeking the harmonious coexistence of humans with nature.” (World Wildlife Fund)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Greece

Hosting organisation:  
WWF Greece  
[www.wwf.gr](http://www.wwf.gr)

Sending organisations:  
ADICE [www.adice.asso.fr](http://www.adice.asso.fr)  
Asociacion LibreZ  
EIL Cultural & Educational Travel  
[www.eiluk.org](http://www.eiluk.org)

Activity dates:  
15/12/2007 – 14/12/2008  
(12 months)



**SPAIN:** Luisa, 26 years



**FRANCE:** Emeline, 25 years



**UNITED KINGDOM:** Zoe, 23 years



**GREECE**



## ◀◀ MONITORING BLACK VULTURES IN THE DADIA FOREST, GREECE

Luisa (26 years), had already experienced working with eagles and other raptors in her home country Spain before she decided to work as a volunteer looking after black vultures in Greece with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). She joined for one year (2007/08) two other volunteers Emeline from France (25 years) and Zoe from the UK (23 years), both of whom had also worked in the field of nature conservation.

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF Greece) was founded in 1990 and joined a worldwide network of 29 other national organisations set up to build a future where people lived in harmony with nature. The Dadia Forest Reserve in north-east Greece is one of the last refuges for predatory birds in Europe with 36 species living in a protected habitat, including the black vulture and sea eagle. One of the principal objectives of WWF's work is to ensure that this protection is long-term by appropriate legislation.

Much of their time the volunteers spent carrying out field work, monitoring the reproductive activities and feeding habits of black vultures. They also studied the impact of wind farms on large birds. Luisa took a lead in using sophisticated GPS transmitters attached to a sample of vultures to study the pattern of their movements. They also participated in local environmental events and accompanied staff members to Bulgaria to discuss cross-border cooperation.

All three volunteers learned a lot about monitoring birds of prey, about vulture trapping and chick ringing and how to use the new electronic monitoring processes. Not having lived abroad for such a long period before they learned how to be autonomous and their social and interpersonal skills improved considerably. They also learned to accept difference and developed strong team work skills, important in carrying out systematic scientific research. They all learned Greek and Luisa made such remarkable progress that she could converse in this language quite fluently at the end of her stay. She intended to continue the study of Greek on her return to Spain. In fact the experience gave them all a clearer idea of the career they would follow after their European Voluntary Service project.

The presence of the volunteers enriched the field centre because of their personalities and the freshness and curiosity they brought to their work. Their contribution to strengthening relations with local people and convincing them of their responsibility for conservation was particularly appreciated.

“I was fascinated to learn that another economy exists and that it is possible to do business differently by placing human values and not the financial capital at the heart of an economic system.” (Ágnes, 23)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Luxembourg

Hosting organisation:  
Institut Européen pour l'Economie Solidaire,  
INEES  
[www.inees.org](http://www.inees.org)

Sending organisation:  
Tegyünk Együtt az Ifjúságért Alapítvány  
[www.teisalapitvany.hu](http://www.teisalapitvany.hu)

Activity dates:  
01/12/2008 – 30/11/2009  
(12 months)



HUNGARY: Ágnes, 23 years



LUXEMBOURG



## **ADVOCATING A SOLIDARITY- BASED ECONOMY IN SCHIFFLANGE, LUXEMBOURG**

Ágnes (23 years) is a graduate of the Budapest Business School in her native Hungary and is currently carrying out research for her masters in *Learning and Development in Multicultural and Multilingual Contexts* in Luxembourg. Her combined interests in multiculturalism and alternative ways of running the world's economy prompted her to apply to spend a year (2008/09) working on an international conference on this theme.

The host organisation, Institut Européen pour l'Economie Solidaire (the European Institute for a Solidarity-based Economy) carries out research on economic and social issues and is an advocate for an alternative approach to running the economy. The Institute gives advice to the Luxembourg government on economic matters and provides technical background for the government's annual economic work plan. In 2009, it undertook to run the 4<sup>th</sup> International Forum "Globalisation of Solidarity". It was the first time that the Forum, given the title of Lux'09, was held in Europe and the three day conference attracted 1000 participants from around the world. Themes discussed included responsible production and consumption, fair trade and concerns for the environment.

The Institute gave Ágnes ample space in which to use her own initiative in helping to set up Lux'09. She was directly concerned with making travel and accommodation bookings for the 150 volunteers at the conference and organising an exhibition and evening events such as a concert and theatre visit. Besides the conference, Ágnes was involved in organising a youth exchange and participated in the work of consolidating a world-wide network linking individuals and organisations active in the field of solidarity-based economies.

The experience of living in the multilingual setting of Luxembourg and working on an international conference on the economy helped Ágnes to make extensive progress in her twin academic interests. Her work was so appreciated by her hosts that she was offered employment at the Institute to work on the follow-up to the conference. At the same time she also decided to embark on research for her masters at the University of Luxembourg. Her already strong interest in languages has been reinforced through her work with the multilingual gathering at the conference and her contacts with the tri-lingual population of Luxembourg.

By reaching out to young people Ágnes helped to broaden the Institute's target public and it has consequently been able to set up a number of successful activities for young people in the community, including further European Voluntary Service projects and training courses on active citizenship.

## GLOBAL SOCIETY

“My European Voluntary Service taught me a lot about the possible outcomes of global warming and about what we can do to mitigate the results; it also helped me to develop my practical, professional and personal skills.” (Pablo, 26)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Hungary

Hosting organisation:  
Messzelátó Egyesület  
[www.messzelato.hu](http://www.messzelato.hu)

Sending organisation:  
Centro Andaluz de Iniciativas  
Internacionales  
<http://iniciativasinternacionalescordoba.blogspot.com/>

Activity dates:  
01/02/2009 – 31/12/2009  
(11 months)



SPAIN: Pablo, 26 years



HUNGARY



## ◀◀ HELPING TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Pablo (26 years), from Córdoba in Spain, worked as a volunteer in Hungary after graduating in Administration and Business Management. His hosts in Hungary were the Natural Conservation Association, where he worked for 11 months in 2009. His experience as a volunteer helped him to find a job in the UK within a month of completing his service.

The association, Messzelátó Egyesület, was founded in 1999, and its mission, as its name in Hungarian indicates, is “to look into the future”. It helps people to recognise the value of their natural environment and the need to protect it. Central to its role is highlighting the dangers of global warming and providing educational tools on the subject for use in schools.

One of Pablo’s most important contributions to the work of the Association was to organise a photo competition for schools inspired by the work of environmental organisations promoting urgent action at a global level to combat the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> gas released into the earth’s atmosphere. Entries for the competition needed to demonstrate the challenges of climate change and propose concrete solutions that could be applied. Pablo also helped to organise events such as the Climate Bath Party in Budapest and assisted with data collection and the organisation of workshops for schools on climate change. He gave Spanish lessons to Hungarian youngsters and, in return, studied Hungarian.

The experience of volunteering represented a major learning exercise for Pablo and he acquired knowledge about biodiversity, eco-farming, waste prevention, the natural resources of Hungary and the main factors which endanger them. He also learned how to live and work in a foreign community and improved his knowledge of photography, as well as his computer skills.

Messzelátó Egyesület in Budapest clearly benefited from the commitment, energy and skills of their young volunteer and continues to use materials that Pablo had produced during his stay amongst them. His different way of working and approach to problem solving was enriching for his hosts and the people he met and worked with in Budapest.

**“I have seen big changes in some volunteers who arrive shy and insecure and leave with a very social and self-confident character.” (Nature Trust Malta)**

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Malta

Hosting organisation:  
Nature Trust  
[www.naturetrustmalta.org](http://www.naturetrustmalta.org)

Sending organisations:  
Allianssi Youth Exchanges  
[www.nuorisovaihto.fi](http://www.nuorisovaihto.fi)  
Legambiente Volontariato Ecopolis Torino  
Associazione  
[www.legambiente.to.it](http://www.legambiente.to.it)

Activity dates:  
01/03/2009 – 28/02/2010  
(12 months)



**FINLAND:** Karin Marie, 21 years



**ITALY:** Angela, 25 years



**MALTA**



## ◀◀ SAVING TURTLES IN SAN LUCJAN, MALTA

Karin Marie (21 years), who is now taking courses in forestry in her native Finland, and Angela Bianca Maria (25 years) from Italy spent a year (2009/10) as volunteers in Malta, helping to rehabilitate turtles.

Their hosts were the Nature Trust Malta, whose marine rescue team in San Lucjan nurse back to health some 20 injured turtles a year which have been accidentally caught in fishermen's nets or injured by a harpoon. Their rehabilitation usually takes between six to nine months and when fully fit again the animals are released back into the open sea. Before that they are weighed and tagged as part of a Europe-wide research project. Educational activities are organised around these events to raise awareness of the risk to the environment of irresponsible behaviour, such as dumping plastic bags into the sea which can suffocate the turtles.

The volunteers were fully integrated into the work of the rescue team and assisted with the various stages of the turtles' rehabilitation, which included their medication, under the supervision of a vet, their cleaning and feeding and their eventual release back into the sea. They were involved in the educational activities of the centre and accompanied students and adults on guided walks to promote environmental protection. They also helped with the organisation of visits by schoolchildren by devising environmental quizzes and other games and took part in beach management activities such as inspecting Blue Flag beaches and preparing water quality reports.

Both volunteers were encouraged to take ownership of their work and, as a consequence, felt empowered to make suggestions on how to improve the work of the centre. This enhanced their self-esteem and sense of initiative. The volunteers also gained basic competency in research work and deepened their experience of environmental protection. They mixed well with local people and improved their social skills and knowledge of English. Thanks to their experience in Malta some of the volunteers were able to find work in a similar field on their return to their own countries.

The contribution made by the volunteers had a positive impact on the nature conservation work of the Trust. This was evident from turtle recovery rates and the positive feedback concerning the educational activities in which the volunteers were closely involved. The European awareness of the local community was also enhanced by the frequent contact made with the volunteers.

## GLOBAL SOCIETY

“Working for the Anne Frank House was a great way of getting familiar with the activities of a leading European NGO and its outstanding approaches in teaching about tolerance and human rights. I am now convinced that countries like Ukraine need a stronger development of NGOs that strive for a civil society and that young people can play a significant role.”  
(Sergey, 24)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
the Netherlands

Hosting organisation:  
Anne Frank Stichting (Anne Frank House)  
[www.annefrank.nl](http://www.annefrank.nl)

Sending organisation:  
The Jewish Foundation of Ukraine  
[www.jew-fund.kiev.ua](http://www.jew-fund.kiev.ua)

Activity dates:  
01/12/2008 – 31/12/2009  
(12 months)

UKRAINE: Sergey, 24 years

THE NETHERLANDS



## ◀◀ **COMBATING RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION IN AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS**

Sergey (24 years), a researcher with the Jewish Foundation of Ukraine, spent a year (2008/09) as a volunteer with the Anne Frank House (AFH) in the Netherlands.

His host, the Anne Frank Stichting (Anne Frank House — AFH) in Amsterdam, is a museum which houses the secret annex where Anne Frank and her family and four friends hid for more than two years during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. The museum has a well-developed educational programme and disseminates teaching materials promoting a critical reflection on World War II and on what anti-semitism and discrimination can lead to. One of the AFH activities is a worldwide travelling exhibition *Anne Frank — a history for today* and one of its copies is currently on tour along the Dutch-German frontier, stimulating a cross-border dialogue between young people.

Sergey spent most of his time working at the AFH headquarters in Amsterdam and helping to organise the exhibition in four different schools and the town hall. His role was to make logistical arrangements for the tour and train the exhibition guides, many of whom were of Moroccan-Dutch descent. Half-way through his stay, he was obliged to return home to renew his visa and whilst back in Ukraine for one month he helped to establish the AFH educational programme. He completed his year in Amsterdam helping with the day-to-day activities of the international department, guiding museum visitors and organising events. Because of his experience with the AFH he has found employment as a free-lance historian and educator for different NGOs in Ukraine and elsewhere on racism and anti-semitism.

Working on a daily basis in a Dutch NGO introduced Sergey to the different way in which some administrative procedures are conducted in the Netherlands. The intercultural activities of the AFH in which he was involved taught him how to combat present forms of racism and intolerance in his own country. His confidence increased as well as his knowledge of Dutch and he was able to assume a higher profile in the seminars organised around the exhibition.

The guides trained by Sergey learned a lot from him, and the work of the AFH in general benefited from the information he gave on the war-time history of his own country which was also faced with the horrors of anti-semitism and intolerance under the Nazi regime.

“I would certainly recommend other people to do the European Voluntary Service because it is something that may open new doors for you, new doors to gaining something new and useful which later on could brighten your life and future.” (Andrei, 27)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Austria

Hosting organisation:  
Caritas, Flüchtlingshaus  
[www.caritas-salzburg.at](http://www.caritas-salzburg.at)

Sending organisation:  
Pädagogische Universität “Ion Creanga”

Activity dates:  
01/07/2009 – 01/09/2010  
(12 months)



MOLDOVA: Andrei, 27 years



AUSTRIA



## HELPING TO GIVE RELIEF IN SALZBURG, AUSTRIA

Andrei (27 years) from Moldova had never been involved in social work before spending 12 months (2009/10) as a volunteer in the Caritas Home for Refugees in Salzburg, Austria. It opened his eyes to a whole new world and perhaps to a future professional commitment.

CARITAS is a network of Catholic relief, development and social service agencies operating in some 200 countries around the world. Its centre in Salzburg runs a home for refugees, many of them asylum seekers caught up in recent conflicts in South-East Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The centre provides shelter for them until the legal proceedings allow them to move on.

Andrei's main contribution to the work of his hosts was to make the residents feel welcome in their new surroundings. He used his communicative skills and big-hearted personality to allay the fears of children and adults seeking refuge from their recent experience of conflict and natural disasters. His fluency in various languages helped him to communicate directly with the refugees and made them feel at home. He accompanied the refugees in their daily routines, helping the children do their homework, going to the doctors with the adults, doing translations and simply making himself available to answer their needs.

Andrei was always thinking and acting as a member of a greater team in the service of others and not just as a private individual. He discovered social work as a volunteer and developed a deep commitment to the mission of Caritas. He earned the trust of the refugees and clearly enjoyed his stay at the centre. The experience awoke in him the ambition to continue working in the field of humanitarian aid and to contact other agencies with a similar mission.

Andrei clearly established friendly relations at every level and the residents of the centre benefited from his open-minded and generous approach. His presence also helped the centre's fight against xenophobia.

**“The European Voluntary Service experience is a privilege. It is a way to promote the European integration and solidarity.”  
(Katharina, 21)**

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Portugal

Hosting organisation:  
A Rocha, Associação Cristã de Estudos e  
Defesa do Ambiente  
<http://en.arocha.org/portugal/>

Sending organisation:  
Euowerkstatt Jena e.V.  
[www.euowerkstatt-jena.de](http://www.euowerkstatt-jena.de)

Activity dates:  
01/02/2009 – 31/07/2009  
(six months)



**GERMANY:** Katharina, 21 years



**PORTUGAL**



## HELPING TO PROTECT RIA DE ALVOR IN PORTUGAL

In 2009, Katharina (21 years) from Germany spent six months as a volunteer working on nature preservation on the Alvor estuary in Portugal. She intended to study biology and considered that the experience in Portugal would help her with her university education.

The host organisation, the Associação Cristã de Estudos e Defesa do Ambiente, was established in Portugal in 1986 and is part of the A Rocha International network that spans 18 countries. Its mission is to make a contribution to nature conservation and to this end it conducts scientific research in several areas of the natural world. In Portugal, it has worked with the government to combat the loss of bio-diversity and to classify the nature reserve of the Alvor estuary as a Natura 2000 site. A large number of young volunteers apply each year to come to Ria de Alvor and the Association usually selects candidates with some training in the natural sciences.

Katharina's main task was to help with the running of the Field Study Centre. This involved her in showing visitors around the site and carrying out general maintenance tasks. She also took part in on-going programmes, such as ringing and counting birds and carrying out scientific studies on local wildlife and habitats as a field assistant. Data collection and the maintenance of a data base was another of her tasks and she ran classes on the environment for children visiting the site (some 1000 secondary age students visited the centre in 2009). She also had the opportunity to become involved in a number of cultural and sporting events.

The experience of her European Voluntary Service in Portugal far exceeded Katharina's expectations. She learned a lot about different habitats and species in the area, how to ring birds and extract them from the nets. By taking part in a university devised course on sea bird research techniques, she gained an insight into scientific research which proved of great value in her university studies. She also learned to communicate in Portuguese and enjoyed her contacts with local villagers. But the most important value of the experience for Katharina was that taking part in a European Voluntary Service project with other young Europeans helped her to understand what it means to be European.

The Association were particularly pleased with Katharina's work and willingness to play such an active part in the life of the community; it gained a new friend and a committed supporter of their work and mission.

“At a professional level my experiences with this project helped me find some kind of artistic voice, leading to several exhibitions and residencies.” (Reg, 27)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Iceland

Hosting organisation:  
Umhverfisstofnun (The Environment and Food  
Agency of Iceland)  
[www.ust.is](http://www.ust.is)

Sending organisations:  
Fédération Régionale Maison des Jeunes  
et de la Culture Région Centre  
[www.mjc-cmjcfr.asso.fr/Centre](http://www.mjc-cmjcfr.asso.fr/Centre)  
Anffias Onlus Pordenone  
[www.anffias.net](http://www.anffias.net)  
AFS Interculturele Programma's VZW  
[www.afsvlaanderen.be](http://www.afsvlaanderen.be)  
Ayuntamiento de Zaragoza, Servicio de Juventud  
[www.zaragoza/juventud](http://www.zaragoza/juventud)  
BTCV [www.btcv.org.uk](http://www.btcv.org.uk)

Activity dates:  
01/05/2008 – 01/01/2009  
(eight months)



**BELGIUM:** Reg, 27 years



**FRANCE:** Alexandre, 27 years



**SPAIN:** Marta, 23 years



**ITALY:** Nicola, 29 years



**UNITED KINGDOM:** Alistair, 28 years / Carmel, 26  
years / Rachel, 24 years / Margaret, 25 years



**ICELAND**



## ◀◀ MENDING THE NATURE TRAILS IN ICELAND

Reg (27 years), an artist from Belgium, spent eight months (2008/09) as a volunteer carrying out conservation work in Iceland with seven other volunteers: Alistair (28 years), Carmel (26 years), Rachel (24 years) and Margaret (25 years), all from the United Kingdom, Alexandre (27 years), from France, Marta (23 years) from Spain and Nicola (29 years) from Italy.

Umhverfisstofnun is the Environment and Food Agency of Iceland, operating under the Ministry for the Environment. Its role is to promote the protection and sustainable use of Iceland's natural resources, as well as public welfare by helping to ensure a healthy environment and safer consumer goods. One of its fields of operation is the conservation of designated protected areas and it is to help with this work that some 150 volunteers are invited each year from around the world.

On arrival, Reg and his co-volunteers were put through some intensive training to ensure they could cope with the particular demands of the project. Divided into teams with a trained leader, often a former volunteer, they were then involved in all aspects of practical conservation tasks in a variety of locations. Much of the work focused on upland trail construction and maintenance, repairing heritage sites and the removal of invasive plant species from protected wilderness areas. The volunteers also carried out domestic duties around the camp and day to day problem solving.

The programme was very challenging and having to work outdoors, sometimes in severe weather conditions, with volunteers from different cultural backgrounds greatly improved the team work skills and mutual understanding of young people. Out of the eight volunteers, three have obtained jobs in the environmental field due to their experience as a volunteer and five have returned to Iceland at their own expense to offer their services a second time. The landscapes of Iceland have influenced Reg's art in a major way and led to his first solo exhibition. For him, with his artistic eye, digging a hole and building a stone step could be interpreted as the first important cultural act one can perform.

The condition of Iceland's exceptionally beautiful and well-kept environment is in no small way due to their policy of inviting committed volunteers from around the world to help them in their work of preservation.

“Both the volunteers and children developed their skills and self-esteem which will enable them to be active members of society and to engage in activities aimed at a global dialogue.” (EHT-Network)

Project funded by the Education,  
Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency  
in Brussels

Hosting organisation:  
Embracing Hidden Talents (EHT-Network)  
<http://orgs.tigweb.org/embracing-hidden-talents-network>

Sending organisations:  
Zavod Voluntariat Slovenia  
[www.zavod-voluntariat.si](http://www.zavod-voluntariat.si)  
SCI Germany [www.sci-d.de](http://www.sci-d.de)  
UNA Exchange Wales [www.unaexchange.org](http://www.unaexchange.org)  
INEX-SDA Czech Republic [www.inexsda.cz](http://www.inexsda.cz)

Activity dates:  
01/08/2009 – 01/02/2010  
(seven months)

 **SLOVENIA:** Petra, 28 years / Masa, 22 years / Maja, 24 years

 **GERMANY:** Ulrike, 23 years / Cassandra, 23 years /  
Stephany, 27 years

 **UNITED KINGDOM:** Ashleigh, 18 years / Stacey, 22 years

 **CZECH REPUBLIC:** Paula, 27 years / Gabriela, 22 years /  
Martin, 27 years

 **GHANA**



## EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE IN ACCRA, GHANA

Petra (28 years) from Slovenia, spent almost seven months (2009/10) with 10 other volunteers working with disadvantaged children in Ghana. The other volunteers were Masa (22 years) and Maja (24 years), both from Slovenia, Ulrike (23 years), Cassandra (23 years) and Stephany (27 years), all from Germany, Ashleigh (18 years) and Stacey (22 years), both from Wales (UK), and Paula (27 years), Gabriela (22 years) and Martin (27 years), all from the Czech Republic.

The hosting organisation, Embracing Hidden Talents (EHT-Network) in Accra, Ghana coordinates projects in the educational sector, such as organising camps for disadvantaged children and young people and offering activities in a community library. It arranges discussions about HIV/AIDS and provides educational support for children whose parents are HIV positive. It runs workshops on child labour and promotes the education of girls. Finally it has established training centres for homeless school drop-outs and street children.

Petra and the other volunteers helped to organise workshops for deprived communities in Accra, using art and other creative methods such as drama, dance, acrobatics and singing. They also gave support to the workshops on issues related to HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and teenage pregnancies. A film they made during their stay was sent to all the organisations that had participated in the project.

All the volunteers were deeply affected by their experience which for many was described as life changing. They encountered a different culture in Ghana which taught them new approaches to work and family life. Their stay in Ghana has stretched their horizons, developed their professional and team working ability and improved their organisational skills. They also learned some of the local language and greatly improved their spoken English.

The greatest achievement of this project was the impact it had on the young Ghanaians who were empowered by discovering their talents in drama, painting and the other creative activities, and as a consequence, gained confidence and a more positive attitude towards their own lives. The multinational make-up of the volunteers brought a European dimension to this African setting and created bonds of respect and solidarity.

## INNOVATIVE SOCIETY

“I noticed that many people in Germany still find East European countries far away and strange, although they are the new EU member states, and demonstrate almost no interest in them; ignorance and prejudice instead are widely spread.” (Rebekka, 19)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Bulgaria

Hosting organisation:  
Association for Democratic Education (FAR)  
[www.farburgas.eu](http://www.farburgas.eu)

Sending organisation:  
Internationaler Bauorden, Ludwigshafen  
[www.bauorden.de](http://www.bauorden.de)

Activity dates:  
01/09/2009 – 31/07/2010  
(11 months)



GERMANY: Rebekka, 19 years



BULGARIA



## ◀◀ BUILDING BRIDGES IN BURGAS, BULGARIA

Rebekka (19 years) from Germany, wishing to discover a new EU member state, spent 11 months as a volunteer with the Association for Democratic Education (FAR) in Bulgaria.

FAR (which means lighthouse in English) was set up in 1995 in Burgas, Bulgaria, to contribute to the development of stable democracies in South-Eastern Europe and the fostering of a democratic society in Bulgaria. In its early years, projects and seminars were organised in cooperation with the Academy for Civic and Social Education in Heppenheim, Germany. It is now part of a major network of non-governmental organisations in the Balkans, promoting democracy and encouraging people of all generations to be involved in civil society and the political process. Building bridges between young people across Europe through volunteering is one of FAR's major aims.

Besides helping with office duties — she was responsible for creating FAR's website in German, French and English — Rebekka was involved in promoting the activities of the Association and the principles of volunteering in seminars and visits to schools and universities. She also worked with youth groups and with children in an orphanage during her free time.

Rebekka greatly benefited from the non-formal education she received carrying out her work as a volunteer. She learned to deal with people from different backgrounds and developed empathy for the disadvantaged. She became competent in using non-formal teaching methods, such as how to use interactive games to animate language classes. Her involvement with the administration taught her a lot about project and financial management and how to deal with public authorities. She learned Bulgarian and, by taking part in a number of seminars, acquired an extensive knowledge of Bulgarian political life and history. Her interest in Bulgarian culture led her to join a Bulgarian choir to record and translate the lyrics of Bulgarian folk songs. She also subsequently changed her course of studies to psychology as a result of her experience.

The project *Bridge for Europe* was one of the most successful projects of the host organisation. Rebekka's personal commitment has motivated other people and institutions. Her innovative ideas, as well as her different ways of seeing and doing things, have positively influenced the work of the host organisation. Even today, she continues her link with the Association by participating in different cultural events around Europe promoting Bulgarian folklore.

## INNOVATIVE SOCIETY

“I have learnt to learn by watching and imitating, which has meant a lot to me in my personal development, and I am really hungry for learning now.” (Anne, 20)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Denmark

Hosting organisations:  
SOS Kinderdorf Berlin-Moabit  
[www.sos.kinderdorf.de](http://www.sos.kinderdorf.de)  
SOS Kinderdorf, Schulhort  
[www.sos-kinderdorf.de](http://www.sos-kinderdorf.de)  
Nestwärme e.V. [www.nestwaerme-berlin.de](http://www.nestwaerme-berlin.de)  
urban-consult GmbH [www.urban-consult.de](http://www.urban-consult.de)

Sending organisation:  
Faaborg-Midtfyn Ungdomsskole  
[www.fmusfaaborgmidtfyn.dk](http://www.fmusfaaborgmidtfyn.dk)

Activity dates:  
01/05/2009 – 01/11/2010  
(seven months)



**DENMARK:** Anne, 20 years / Camilla, 20 years / Lina, 20 years /  
Thomas, 19 years



**GERMANY**



## ◀◀ WORKING IN A KINDERGARTEN IN BERLIN, GERMANY

Anne (20 years) from Denmark, spent seven months (2009/10) working in a kindergarten in Berlin. She joined three other volunteers, also from Denmark: Camilla (20 years), Lina (20 years) and Thomas (19 years).

Their sending organisation, Faaborg-Midtfyn Ungdomsskole (informal education centre) in Faaborg, Denmark, has a long-standing link with four organisations running kindergarten and day-care projects in Berlin (urban-consult, SOS-Kinderdorf Berlin-Moabit, SOS Kinderdorf Schulhort, Nestwärme) and for some time has been sending young people to volunteer their time. The kindergartens and day care centres are often located in fairly run-down neighbourhoods and the children looked after by the volunteers are from a variety of different social backgrounds. Although some are from stable, supportive families, a high proportion are seriously disadvantaged. Some have parents who are unemployed. Others have been diagnosed with HIV or severe behavioural problems.

Anne and her friends were well prepared for their work. Before leaving Denmark they made two visits to Berlin and former Danish volunteers, still working or studying in Berlin, showed them around the city, explained practicalities and discussed German culture and society. They also gave them tips on how to build up networks. By working in the kindergarten Nestwärme Anne provided extra care for the individual child. A special bonus for the children was when she talked to them about her family back home in Denmark and taught them Danish songs and games. In fact, Anne used Danish lullabies to calm the children when they became boisterous. After school hours, she met the parents and became involved in the local community by attending meetings and other events.

Every step of the way the sending organisation in Denmark made sure that the young volunteers received the maximum benefit from their volunteering. A mentor from Denmark visited them several times during the year. They learned a lot about how to work with children, particularly those with the sort of problems encountered in the kindergarten. And of course they learned to speak German fluently and to live successfully in a multicultural setting. The experience changed their lives and made such an impact on Anne that she decided to move to Berlin to take up her studies there.

Anne's volunteering took place within the framework of a well-established relationship between the organisation in Faaborg and the hosting organisations in Berlin. Both have shown how much they value the arrangement by creating a network of former volunteers who help to recruit new volunteers and to train them before they start their work.

## INNOVATIVE SOCIETY

“The project gave a chance to four volunteers from ethnic minorities in Estonia and facing problems of long-term unemployment to gain a new experience and test their abilities in new domains and situations.”

(Volunteers Centre Skopje)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Estonia

Hosting organisation:  
Volunteers Centre Skopje  
[www.vcs.org.mk](http://www.vcs.org.mk)

Sending organisation:  
Estonian UNESCO Youth Association  
[www.euya.ee](http://www.euya.ee)

Activity dates:  
01/04/2009 – 31/05/2010  
(two months)



**ESTONIA:** Irina, 26 years / Maria, 20 years / Vadim, 24 years /  
Andrei, 22 years



**THE FORMER YUGOSLAV  
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**



## **ALTERNATIVE THEATRE FESTIVAL IN SKOPJE, THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

Irina (26 years), from Estonia chose to work as a volunteer for two months in 2010 in the Alternative Theatre Festival, *Faces without Masks*, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia because of her interest in the performing arts. She had already followed courses in juggling, theatre and music in her native Estonia. She joined three other Russian speaking volunteers from Estonia, Maria (20 years), Vadim (24 years) and Andrei (22 years).

The festival was organised by the Volunteers Centre in Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, using the theatre to show disadvantaged young people how creative expression can contribute to the general well-being of society and economic prosperity.

The volunteers worked with actors and performers from different countries, providing them with technical support and taking part in a range of theatre and musical performances. They put to good use their own particular artistic and creative skills; Irina was able to display her juggling skills in the workshops the volunteers organised for local children. She also gave a five-week Russian language class to a group of local students. Other volunteers gave ballroom dance classes and the whole group ran workshops in a day centre for disadvantaged children.

The experience changed their lives. Working creatively in the stimulating atmosphere of the Festival helped the volunteers overcome the low self-esteem that came from being unemployed — they had all been out of work for at least six months — and to take greater pride in their own individual potential. Having to work daily with a range of different people from around the world visiting the Festival, along with the local population, gave an immense boost to their self-confidence and greatly improved their social skills and cultural awareness. All four volunteers are now in employment or full-time education.

The presence of the volunteers had an impact on the local community in Skopje and their work was widely publicised through the local media. They met local people informally or by organising events on Estonia and bringing a real sense of Europe to their hosts.

## INNOVATIVE SOCIETY

**“My European Voluntary Service in Redon gave me the confidence to tackle the impossible. It was a life changing experience for me: it helped me to understand who I am.”  
(Elisa, 24)**

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
France

Hosting organisation:  
MAPAR  
[www.mapar.fr](http://www.mapar.fr)

Sending organisation:  
Comune di Torino  
[www.comune.torino.it/infogio](http://www.comune.torino.it/infogio)

Activity dates:  
09/06/2009 – 09/06/2010  
(12 months)



ITALY: Elisa, 24 years



FRANCE



## ◀◀ YOUNG WORKERS ON STAGE IN REDON, FRANCE

Elisa (24 years), a graduate of Turin University in Italy, had already been on a youth exchange to Ireland before starting her year as a volunteer at the MAPAR in France (2009/10). The arrangement was made with the support of the municipal authorities of Elisa's home town, Turin.

The host organisation, Maison d'Accueil du Pays de Redon (MAPAR), in Brittany, France, is a young worker centre which offers temporary accommodation to young people 16–30 years, as well as providing them with informal education activities and advice on finding employment. The centre has hosted EVS volunteers since 1997 who enrich its work by bringing their different perspectives from other parts of Europe.

Elisa's duties included helping out in the multimedia centre, running workshops for residents and local young people and generally helping them to access the centre's information resources. She also helped with the organisation of a Europe week in the town. On arrival in Redon, Elisa presented a script for a musical that she wanted to put on with local young people. This became her personal project and an important part of her volunteer year. Although initially reticent, her hosts translated the musical into French and recruited a group of 20 young people to take part. Rehearsals were held twice a week over a period of several months and the performance was finally put on to a full house and a five-minute standing ovation. The activity acted as a catalyst, bringing together a wide cross-section of young people, as well as local artists and institutions.

The staging of her concert was the fulfilment of a dream for Elisa, not only because of her interest in musical theatre and dance but because its theme dealt with problems facing young people and the arts. She learned a lot about how to put an idea into practice and how to motivate other people. Her unflinching enthusiasm earned her the respect of both the centre and the community at large.

Elisa's theatre project was the first time her hosts had worked in the cultural field and this new experience had enriched their work. A new relationship had been created with the local community and the project proved highly motivating for a number of disadvantaged young people. The work of the centre was also given high praise in the local press.

## INNOVATIVE SOCIETY

“My European Voluntary Service influenced me greatly: my passion for the European idea which led me to my studies, my stage in Brussels, my idea of what I want to do in my life, my way to face other people, my convictions, my everyday life would be completely different without this experience.”  
(Lara, 20)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Italy

Hosting organisation:  
Cesvov, Centro di Servizi per il  
Volontariato della provincia di Varese  
[www.cesvov.it](http://www.cesvov.it)

Sending organisations:  
Ayuntamiento de Burgos, Concejalía  
de Juventud [www.aytoburgo.es/juventud](http://www.aytoburgo.es/juventud)  
Bezirksjugendring Unterfranken/  
Jugendbildungsstätte Unterfranken  
[www.jubi-unterfranken.de](http://www.jubi-unterfranken.de)  
Volunteers Centre Skopje  
[www.vcs.org.mk](http://www.vcs.org.mk)

Activity dates:  
15/09/2008 – 14/08/2009  
(11 months)



**SPAIN:** Sofia, 28 years



**GERMANY:** Lara, 20 years



**THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA:**  
Natasha, 26 years



**ITALY**



## ◀◀ PROMOTING VOLUNTEERING IN VARESE, ITALY

Lara (20 years), who studies Governance and Public Policy in her native Germany, spent 11 months (2008/09) promoting volunteering in Varese, Italy. She joined two other EVS volunteers, Sofia (28 years) from Spain and Natasha (26 years) from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

CESVOV (the Centre of Volunteer Services for the Province of Varese) is an association created in 1997 to promote and support the development of volunteering in the Province of Varese. It offers services such as training and legal consultancy. It also works with several high schools in the Province and the university of Varese, encouraging young people to take up the opportunity of volunteering. Amongst its members are 80 associations working in this field.

At the beginning of their year, the volunteers were introduced to the work of the local voluntary organisations, as well as to the European Voluntary Service club which brings together former volunteers from the Province for debates and an exchange of information. They were also given intensive Italian lessons. The volunteers met students from the local high schools and shared their knowledge with them about opportunities provided by EU programmes. Each of the three volunteers then pursued her own personal project. Lara's choice was to support a youth exchange and to create and publish "CESVOV News" which appeared at intervals during the year.

Because of her frequent contact with the member associations of CESVOV, Lara was able to gain a wide knowledge of volunteering and the areas where it operates: support for health and social care, people's rights, cultural and environmental heritage and the fight against xenophobia. This experience proved very useful in Lara's personal development and professional future: a strong interest in EU policies resulting in studies focusing on European integration.

The young volunteers brought an added value to the work of CESVOV and the different activities to which they were associated. Their personal projects introduced innovative ideas and activities which were adopted by their hosts, such as Lara's newsletter. They also helped to spread the culture and cause of volunteering among the young people and community at large in the Province of Varese.

## INNOVATIVE SOCIETY

**“The experience I had during my European Voluntary Service project was a time of challenge and an expansion of my limits. My personality and attitude towards life were shaped by this project and even now, some of the lessons I learned are helping me in my work and plans for the future.”**  
**(Andreea, 25)**

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Romania

Hosting organisation:  
Toplum Gönüllüleri Vakfı  
[www.tog.org.tr](http://www.tog.org.tr)

Sending organisation:  
A.R.T. Fusion Association  
[www.artfusion.ro](http://www.artfusion.ro)

Activity dates:  
10/02/2009 – 10/02/2010  
(12 months)



ROMANIA: Andreea, 25 years



TURKEY



## ◀◀ USING STREET THEATRE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IN ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Andreea (25 years) from Romania was the coordinator of the international department of A.R.T. Fusion for three years in Bucharest before spending a year (2009/10) as a volunteer with the Turkish youth organisation Toplum Gönüllüleri (TOG) in Istanbul.

A.R.T. Fusion was set up in Bucharest in 2005 at the initiative of seven young people. Its mission was to contribute to the personal development of children and young people by using the participative arts — theatre, street animation, music, dance — to promote the principles of global responsibility and active citizenship. The host organisation in Turkey, Toplum Gönüllüleri (TOG), an organisation of community volunteers, was also set up following an initiative taken by young people in 2002.

The project was based on Andreea's own ideas and experience; its aim was to stimulate the active participation of young people in problems that concern today's society by using drama techniques and creative street animation, bearing in mind that the society in which she would now be working was very different in many ways from her own. The position of women in society was one of the topics treated. Some 60 young people were trained to be multipliers in social theatre and more than 10 streets campaigns were organised to raise awareness of different topics.

Working in Turkey with its different social problems and cultural constraints opened up many new horizons for Andreea. She was so encouraged by her stay in Istanbul that she produced a guide, *Challenge You and Your Community*, explaining to youth organisations how to use street animation for social change.

The young Turkish participants eventually overcame their initial hesitation at Andreea's methods and were increasingly attracted by the idea of acting out on stage the role of responsible citizens bent on making social change in the communities where they lived.

## INNOVATIVE SOCIETY

“It was a combination of common sense and creativity and an example of what society can do to put to good use an empty space and lots of straw bales and empty beer crates.”  
(Truc Sphérique)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Slovakia

Hosting organisation:  
Truc Sphérique  
[www.stanica.sk](http://www.stanica.sk)

Sending organisation:  
Latvian Young Farmers' club  
[www.jzk.lv](http://www.jzk.lv)

Activity dates:  
01/02/2008 – 31/12/2008  
(11 months)



LATVIA: Ints, 24 years



SLOVAKIA



## ◀◀ ART AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN ZILINA-ZARIECIE, SLOVAKIA

Ints (24 years), from Latvia spent 11 months (2008) as a volunteer working on a theatre project in Slovakia.

The host organisation Truc Sphérique, which was set up in 1998, runs the centre for contemporary arts, Stanica, located in the old railway station in the Slovakian town of Zilina-Zariecie. Activities include theatrical performances, art exhibitions, and workshops on various themes. The arts complex is central to the redevelopment of the area as a social and community amenity and public park.

Ints, who had a particular interest in the development of rural and urban spaces, worked as a volunteer alongside professionals on the construction of a new theatre, located under the arches of the railway bridge and made entirely from natural and recycled materials. 3 000 beer crates, 800 straw bales, 120 old railway sleepers, one old shipping container, two lorry-loads of clay etc. ensured that a new venue for contemporary theatre and dance was established in the town at minimum cost, doubling the capacity of the Stanica arts centre.

By living and working in an entirely new environment Ints learned to speak Slovak well enough to communicate with native speakers. His contact with the local population and involvement in an arts centre extended his knowledge of the country and its culture. He learned a lot about the technical side of theatre, particularly lighting. But above all Ints learned how to work in a team and to undertake tasks for which in many cases he had no previous experience. Like other members of the team he was often left to his own devices to find solutions to problems arising in constructing such an unconventional building and this developed in him a strong sense of his own autonomy and greatly increased his self-confidence.

His hosts benefited from Ints' commitment to their programme and in particular to the work on the theatre project. After he had finished his volunteering, Ints returned to work in Stanica.

## INNOVATIVE SOCIETY

“This work is essential if Northern Ireland is to move away from a legacy of violent conflict.” (Public Achievement)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
United Kingdom

Hosting organisation:  
Belfast Museum Group-Public Achievement  
[www.publicachievement.com](http://www.publicachievement.com)

Sending organisation:  
Las Niñas del Tul <http://lasdeltul.net/>  
Ibo Italia [www.iboitalia.org](http://www.iboitalia.org)

Activity dates:  
01/08/2009 – 31/07/2010  
(12 months)



SPAIN: José Miguel, 30 years



ITALY: Sabrina, 27 years



UNITED KINGDOM



## ◀◀ HELPING TO MEND FENCES IN NORTHERN IRELAND, UK

Sabrina (27 years) from Italy joined another volunteer, José (30 years) from Spain on a placement working for a year (2009/10) with young people in Northern Ireland.

Their host in Northern Ireland was the organisation, Public Achievement, whose mission is to build democratic communities in Northern Ireland by working with young people and adults in ways which encourage active citizenship. Its focus is on communities facing major social and economic problems and which still bear the scars of the inter-communal conflicts that have so troubled Northern Ireland over the past few decades. Different venues — schools, youth clubs, museums — are used for meetings with people where they can debate issues and prepare projects together under the guidance of a coach.

Sabrina and José played a full part in the programme of meetings and seminars for young people. The themes they dealt with were mainly connected with citizenship in a society which was still divided and sectarian in spite of the peace accords and power sharing. Their mission was to engage young people on public issues that can help them to learn the skills of working democratically and non-violently. They made a short film which was uploaded onto the hosts' website and made a lot of use of Facebook and Youtube.

Debating this crucial issue with young people was an intensive learning exercise for the young volunteers. They were told both versions of the history of the conflict and could more easily understand the background to a problem that has bedevilled the island of Ireland for centuries. They also learned how to negotiate and to guide a debate towards a consensus. Their knowledge of IT and project management greatly improved and their competence in spoken English was an added bonus.

The volunteers brought to their hosts the neutral ground that is so useful in conflict situations. The local young people could relate to them more easily because they were from other countries. The volunteers brought their own example of mobility to young people for whom visiting other parts of their own town was sometimes a challenge. The success of their work confirmed Public Achievement in its belief that international work and volunteering are essential to the ethos of the organisation.

## INNOVATIVE SOCIETY

“Normally these young people have the feeling that they have no skills and are losers. Inga helped them to feel more confident, to discover artistic skills and to experience some successful moments.” (Sozialpädagogische Jugendwohngruppe)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Liechtenstein

Hosting organisation:  
Verein für Betreutes Wohnen  
in Liechtenstein [www.vbw.li](http://www.vbw.li)

Sending organisation:  
Youth in progress [www.yip-info.org](http://www.yip-info.org)

Activity dates:  
05/05/2008 – 05/11/2008  
(six months)



LATVIA: Inga, 23 years



LIECHTENSTEIN



## ◀◀ WORKING WITH THE UNEMPLOYED IN VADUZ, LIECHTENSTEIN

Inga (23 years) has dual nationality, Latvian and Russian, and graduated from the University of Riga. She currently lives in the UK where she is following a course in film studies. Knowing already a lot about the cultural field she wanted to gain experience in social work and chose to spend six months in 2008 as a volunteer working with the unemployed in Liechtenstein.

The hosting organisation was the Sozialpädagogische Jugendwohngruppe (Home for Young People) in Vaduz which works with the social services in Liechtenstein to support young people in difficulty. The organisation provides help and short and longer term accommodation e.g. for unemployed young people, for young mothers with their babies and for young workers in employment, as well as for youngsters of school age.

Inga's main task was to support the residents of the centre in their daily routines, helping when needed with personal matters and generally acting as a coach in chores such as cooking, shopping and doing the housework. She also helped the school-aged youngsters with their homework. She accompanied a number of outings organised for the residents, such as ski trips and camping as well as visits to cultural events. In her free time, she made a film about the life of the centre and interviewed the young people about their views on Europe. The film project, which also involved disadvantaged residents of the Home, was shown later in different places in Liechtenstein and at an event during European Youth Week to an audience of 800 young people.

The views expressed in the film and the reactions of the people who saw it gave Inga a new more critical perspective on Europe seen through the eyes of disadvantaged young people. Making the film was also a preliminary to her decision to follow a film studies course in London. Working at the centre gave her very valuable experience in conflict resolution and conflict prevention and introduced her to social work. She improved her language skills both in German and in English.

Her contribution to the life of the centre was valuable. The young people, many of whom were from severely disadvantaged families or facing major difficulties at school, gained self-respect through their contacts with Inga and the artistic and cultural activities she arranged, particularly the making of the film.

## INNOVATIVE SOCIETY

“The volunteers learned to show sensitivity and tolerance toward the cultural differences and modes of operation.”  
(Aile Eğitim Derneği)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Turkey

Hosting organisation:  
Aile Eğitim Derneği  
[www.aileegitimdernegi.org](http://www.aileegitimdernegi.org)

Sending organisations:  
AFS Interkultur [www.afs.dk](http://www.afs.dk)  
Logo Jugendmanagement GmbH [www.logo.at](http://www.logo.at)  
European Youth For(est) Action [www.eyfa.org](http://www.eyfa.org)  
Jugendwerk der AWO Württemberg e.V.  
[www.jugendwerk24.de](http://www.jugendwerk24.de)  
Volunteer Action for Peace [www.vap.org.uk](http://www.vap.org.uk)

Activity dates:  
15/10/2009 – 15/04/2010  
(six months)

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-  **DENMARK:** James, 27 years / Elisabeth, 19 years
  -  **AUSTRIA:** Angelika, 23 years
  -  **THE NETHERLANDS:** Leilani, 23 years
  -  **GERMANY:** Christina, 19 years
  -  **UNITED KINGDOM:** Samuel, 19 years
  -  **TURKEY**



## ◀◀ HELPING THE NEEDY IN ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Six volunteers spent six months (2009/10) helping with the work of the Aile Eğitim Derneği (AED) in Istanbul, Turkey. They came from five different countries, James (27 years) and Elisabeth (19 years), both from Denmark, Angelika (23 years) from Austria, Leilani (23 years) from the Netherlands, Christina (19 years) from Germany and Samuel (19 years) from the UK.

Aile Eğitim Derneği (AED) is an educational organisation established in Turkey in 2006 with the aim of helping anyone in need, regardless of background, colour, or creed. Supported by volunteers, it runs a number of programmes, distributing relief to the poor, improving the lives of patients in hospital, providing education programmes for refugees. There is a special emphasis on helping young people to grow up as responsible active citizens.

The volunteers shared their time across activities of several programmes: they had hands-on experience in the “Empowerment through Education” programme, by teaching English to Iraqi refugee children; the “Colouring their World” programme, by painting colourful, child-friendly wall murals in hospital children’s wards; the “Building Bridges” programme, by giving musical performances for underprivileged children so as to build bridges between cultures and the “Caring for the Elderly” programme, by organising physical activities to improve their health. They also contributed to institutions needing additional support, by seeking sponsorship and distributing goods and services.

Although the outcome for each volunteer was different depending on their own personality and the activities they covered, they all received training in fields in which they had no previous experience. They gained in self-confidence and their communication skills were greatly improved by having to interact with people from a wide range of different backgrounds. They learned Turkish, some of them at the end being able to speak it fluently, and improved their knowledge of English. Other gains included improved mathematical skills from having to keep careful accounts of expenditure and draw up budgets, computer literacy and the all-important skill of learning to learn.

The host organisation was very satisfied with the contribution made by the volunteers and has laid plans to expand and improve opportunities for future volunteers. All six of the young volunteers have remained in regular contact with AED and some are continuing to work with it on various projects.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

“European Voluntary Service was my best year so far, I learned more than I have ever learned before in just one year. I would definitely recommend European Voluntary Service to anybody who is open-minded and wants to gain new experience!”  
(Clara, 20)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
The French-speaking community of Belgium

Hosting organisation:  
Jozef Swinnen asbl  
[www.swinnen-asbl.be](http://www.swinnen-asbl.be)

Sending organisation:  
AKBV e.V.  
[www.akbv.de](http://www.akbv.de)

Activity dates:  
10/09/2009 – 10/09/2010  
(12 months)



GERMANY: Clara, 20 years



BELGIUM



# « HELPING IN A MULTICULTURAL NEIGHBOURHOOD IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Clara (20 years), from Germany, spent a year as a volunteer at the Jozef Swinnen community centre in Brussels, Belgium in 2009/10. The centre is located in a fairly run-down neighbourhood to the north of the city with a large immigrant population.

The role of the Jozef Swinnen community centre is to assist recently arrived immigrants to settle into their new environment. The neighbourhood is mainly working class and immigrants have taken up residence from Turkey and Morocco and countries in Eastern Europe and Africa. A number of them have large families with a high proportion of children under 12 and some of the parents are poorly educated and unemployed. Their living accommodation is often inadequate, without a telephone, in over-crowded tenement buildings. Services offered by the centre include a medical centre with four doctors and a community health worker; a women's group helping with French language lessons, sewing and cooking classes and other cultural activities for women in the neighbourhood; a children's group, with five youth leaders supporting children at school from three to 12 years, running workshops and organising leisure pursuits and, finally, a nursery for children under three.

Clara was introduced to all aspects of work at the centre and was free to choose where she would like to focus her attentions. She opted to work with the children's group and the nursery. Her tasks involved helping children with their school work and running various creative workshops. She also took children on excursions, helped to run a summer camp and coordinated a group of nursery age children at the Zinneke Parade, an intercultural event which takes place every two years in Brussels.

She applied herself very seriously to her work. Her activities in the centre gave Clara the opportunity to learn more about group management and animation, about conflict resolution and about the administrative procedures to be followed in running an organisation. Her work with children taught her a great deal about the problems they face and how to cope with them. The experience helped her to develop self-confidence and a sense of autonomy. She also made progress in the French language. Her European Voluntary Service motivated her to study psychology.

Her hosts were particularly pleased with the way in which she integrated into an existing team and welcomed the different cultural perspective she brought to their work as well as her own particular way of solving people's problems.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

“For vulnerable young people it is not easy to get in touch with people from another country. They must overcome many barriers including their own feeling of inadequacy. But having similar problems the young volunteers connected with each other.” (Arbeidscentrum de Wroeter)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
The Flemish-speaking community of Belgium

Hosting organisation:  
Arbeidscentrum De Wroeter vzw  
[www.dewroeter.be](http://www.dewroeter.be)

Sending organisation:  
Cooperativa Sociale Grado 16-officine  
dell'autopromozione  
[www.grado16.org](http://www.grado16.org)

Activity dates:  
01/07/2008 – 31/01/2009  
(seven months)



ITALY: Alessandro, 24 years



BELGIUM



## « HELPING THE YOUNG UNEMPLOYED TO INTEGRATE IN KORTESSEM, BELGIUM

Alessandro (24 years) lives in a community centre in Italy for young people who have social problems which prevent them from easily finding regular employment. Through arrangements made by this centre, run by Cooperativa Sociale Grado 16, he was able to find an organisation in Belgium where he spent seven months (2008/09) working as a volunteer on a farm.

His host was Arbeidscentrum de Wroeter, an organisation in Belgium, which provides employment in a sheltered environment for the long term unemployed on its organic farm in Kortessem, Flanders. The organisation's mission is to create conditions of work suitable for vulnerable young people and to help with their social integration. Grado 16 is a similar organisation in Italy, run by the social services, and the two organisations worked closely together to ensure that arrangements were suitable for Alessandro. He was accommodated for his seven month's stay in the home of a mentor, which, in view of the social problems of the young man, was a mark of de Wroeter's commitment to help young people in his situation.

Alessandro enjoyed working on the farm with other young people from similar backgrounds with whom he could connect. They all shared a love of growing organic fruit, vegetables and herbs and this shared interest helped them to integrate as a group. During the summer months they sold their produce at the local market and in winter they carried out other tasks such as collecting wood and sorting fruit to be sold to the public.

The experience had a major impact on Alessandro and on his self-confidence and communication skills. Working with young people from other countries he was also able to appreciate what it was to be a European.

The hosting and sending organisations in Flanders and Italy accepted the challenge of sending a vulnerable young person to work as a volunteer; their optimism proved well-founded and it opens the way for other disadvantaged young people.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

**“The volunteers have a different culture and different ways to work. This is a good opportunity for the residents of the home and also for the staff to learn new things and to feel Europe.” (Königin Fabiola Haus)**

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
The German-speaking community of Belgium

**Hosting organisation:**  
Behindertenstätten G.o.E. Königin  
Fabiola Haus

**Sending organisation:**  
aha, Tipps und Infos für junge Leute  
[www.aha.or.at](http://www.aha.or.at)  
Social Action <http://savanoriai.org/>

**Activity dates:**  
01/09/2007 – 01/09/2008  
(12 months)

 **AUSTRIA:** Barbara, 22 years

 **LITHUANIA:** Jurgita, 24 years

 **BELGIUM**



## « ENRICHING THE LIVES OF THE DISABLED IN EUPEN, BELGIUM

Barbara (22 years) from Austria and Jurgita (24 years) from Lithuania spent a year (2007/08) helping to enrich the lives of physically and mentally disabled young people in Eupen, capital city of the German-speaking community of Belgium.

They spent their year at the Königin Fabiola Haus (Queen Fabiola House) in Eupen, situated in a rural area near the borders with Germany and the Netherlands. The House was set up some 10 years ago to provide residential care for the disabled and to improve the quality of their lives. Each year young volunteers are invited from around the world to share the daily life of the residents, assisting them to achieve autonomy in a number of tasks.

Barbara and Jurgita brought to the House a sense of the outside world, new ways of thinking and doing things. Going on walks and bike rides, shopping in the local community, going to the swimming pool or just having dinner together helped to establish new relationships between the residents. After a period of introduction under the helpful eye of a mentor, the volunteers were free to develop their own ideas for workshops.

During their stay the volunteers learned how to make decisions for themselves as well as to work in a team with the regular staff. They developed an acute awareness of cultural difference and the needs of the disabled. They got to know people in the neighbourhood of the House and an account of their work featured in a local newspaper.

The tasks carried out by the volunteers were complementary to the work of regular staff members, adding value to the lives and intercultural awareness of the disabled residents as well as benefiting the staff with their new ideas and fresh perspectives. In fact the whole community gained from the stimulation provided by the presence of the two young European volunteers.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

**“Jamie’s biggest achievement was to have recognised in herself the inner strength to overcome her own difficulties and to help others with theirs.” (Adult Education Centre)**

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Ireland

Hosting organisation:  
Adult Education Centre of Cesis  
[www.cesis.lv](http://www.cesis.lv)

Sending organisation:  
Peter Mc Verry Trust  
[www.itineraire-international.org](http://www.itineraire-international.org)

Activity dates:  
01/04/2009 – 01/10/2009  
(six months)



**IRELAND:** Jamie, 21 years



**LATVIA**



## TEACHING THE DISADVANTAGED IN CESIS, LATVIA

Jamie (21 years), who had grown up in care in her native Ireland, spent six months in 2009 as a volunteer working in a community for the disadvantaged in Latvia.

The hosting organisation was the Adult Education Centre in Cesis, Latvia, established and funded by the local municipality. Its mission is to organise lifelong learning programmes for adults between the ages of 16 and 60 in the town of Cesis and surrounding area. Since 2005, the Centre has developed a non-formal education approach, involving local young people in all kind of projects. Its focus is on social inclusion and there are workshops and activities for young parents, young people with disabilities and school drop-outs. Volunteers help with this work, bringing an intercultural learning opportunity to the young people at the Centre.

The sending organisation, the Peter McVerry Trust, in Ireland, provides a number of services to meet the needs of young homeless people, including temporary supported accommodation and residential drug-free after-care for recovering drug users. The services are available to those who need help in breaking the cycle of homelessness, and to help their move towards independent living. The Trust has used European Voluntary Service to great effect with this target group often involving young homeless people in short term projects.

During her European Voluntary Service Jamie assisted the youth worker in planning and organising different activities and workshops for young people from a socially disadvantaged background. She worked in particular with three groups — young mothers, a teenage group and young people following treatment for drug addiction. She taught English and organised other group activities such as classes in photography and dance workshops. Twice a month she went with other volunteers to work in a rehabilitation centre for about 30 young people aged between 10 and 18 trying to get rid of different addictions. She also prepared promotional materials for projects carried out by the Centre.

The project was a challenge for Jamie but she overcame her fears and made a valuable contribution to the work of the Centre. Teaching English, her mother tongue, helped her to gain confidence to take on other activities. She learned some Latvian and became familiar with various IT applications and used Skype for the first time.

Young people at the Centre benefited from her presence. She was a very successful communicator and her sunny disposition and willingness to speak Latvian made it easy for her to build up a relationship with young people. It helped the young Latvians overcome the barriers to speaking English and they became increasingly interested in learning about the world outside Latvia.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

**“Jairo has more consciousness now of what it means to be European and Spanish, as well as belonging to the community of young people with disabilities.” (Senator Neumann Heim)**

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Spain

Hosting organisation:  
Behindertenhilfe Hamburg,  
Senator-Neumann-Heim  
[www.bhh-sozialkontor.de](http://www.bhh-sozialkontor.de)

Sending organisation:  
Asociación Cultural en Construcción  
[www.avilesenconstruccion.org](http://www.avilesenconstruccion.org)

Activity dates:  
18/03/2010 – 18/04/2010  
(one month)



**SPAIN:** Jairo, 30 years



**GERMANY**



# « DISABLED PEOPLE'S CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY IN HAMBURG, GERMANY

In spite of his cerebral palsy, Jairo (30 years) travelled to Germany from his centre for the disabled in Spain and spent a month as a volunteer at the Senator Neumann Heim (home for the disabled) in Hamburg in 2010. He was assisted by Santiago Gallego, also from Spain, who had been a long term volunteer at the Home.

The hosting organisation, the BHH Sozialkontor GmbH, has funded the Senator Neumann Heim in Hamburg since 1960. It provides day centre activities and residential accommodation for young people with disabilities to help them face the everyday challenges of their disability.

Jairo wanted to learn from the German way of coping with disabilities so that he could spread the word back in Spain. For this purpose he made a video documentary during his stay, recording the daily life of the Home and the techniques used by the staff. He interviewed people with disabilities on different topics, such as physical barriers, relationships, leisure time and integration in society. In support of the Home's education programme he spent a lot of his time reading books to a blind Spanish resident. He also organised cultural events with other volunteers.

The experience of volunteering and living in the Home profoundly change Jairo's view of his own disability. He also discovered a new sense of autonomy after spending so many years being the over-protected centre of attraction. For the first time in his life he took part in housework and cooking meals. Meeting people from around the world made him conscious of his Spanish and European identity.

His work with other disabled people at the Home taught him that he was also capable of helping others and of making a contribution to society. His documentary allowed him and the other disabled residents to express their views. At the end of his stay he was firmly committed to the idea of volunteering and has used his video and an article in the local press to convince other young people with disabilities to take up the opportunity of European Voluntary Service.

Disabled residents at the Home appreciated very much being able to take part in Jairo's video documentary and to express their feelings about disability.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

**“I discovered that music and dance can lead to a quite different quality of communication and understanding between people — communication between two different cultures and between the sighted and the sightless.” (Judith,21)**

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Cyprus

Hosting organisation:  
Pancyprian Organization of the Blind  
[www.pot.org.cy](http://www.pot.org.cy)

Sending organisation:  
LeISA GmbH  
[www.leisa-leipzig.de](http://www.leisa-leipzig.de)

Activity dates:  
11/01/2009 – 30/09/2009  
(nine months)



**GERMANY:** Judith, 21 years



**CYPRUS**



## ◀◀ CARING FOR THE BLIND IN NICOSIA, CYPRUS

Judith (21 years), a student of ethnology in the university of Leipzig in Germany, spent nine months in 2009 as a volunteer in Nicosia, Cyprus, working in the Pancyprian Organisation of the Blind.

The Pancyprian Organisation was set up in 1980 to care for the needs and rights of blind people in Cyprus; it runs the only school for the blind on the island. Its mission is to assist blind people in their daily lives, besides providing for the community a library of recorded books and other specially adapted materials.

Judith's became very much part of the life of the school helping the blind to face the challenges of everyday living. She enjoyed recording books and magazines in Braille and producing leaflets and publishing an international newsletter. She also helped to organise sporting events and other leisure activities and gave crucial assistance in locating different funding programmes for the blind who were unable to do this for themselves. During her time at the school she and her friends made a short film documenting the life of blind and visually-impaired people in Cyprus to show how their dreams are no different to the dreams of people who can see.

With the help of her mentor, who also taught her Greek, the experience at the school represented for Judith a steep learning curve. She acquired negotiating skills in a very different cultural setting to the one she was used to and a deep awareness of the needs and predicament of the blind. She also became quite expert in the use of IT, particularly when applied to the methods and techniques developed for the blind community. The experience in Cyprus was clearly life changing for Judith in terms of her studies and future career. It showed her the path she wanted to follow in the future.

Judith enriched the life of the visually impaired people through her hardworking and caring contribution and helped them to broaden their experience of Europe.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

**“You do not learn if you do not even try. It is important to be open for any challenge. I had the opportunity to test myself, do things that I have never done before in my life because I was afraid.” (Stephano, 30)**

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Latvia

Hosting organisation:  
Adult Education Centre of Cesis  
[www.cesis.lv](http://www.cesis.lv)

Sending organisations:  
Sezione Laziale della UILDM (Unione  
Italiana Lotta alla Distrofia Muscolare)  
[www.uildmlazio.org](http://www.uildmlazio.org)  
ONLUS [www.quantoseiutile.org](http://www.quantoseiutile.org)  
Peter Mc Verry Trust  
[www.itineraire-international.org](http://www.itineraire-international.org)  
Ushanga ry. [www.ushanga.fi](http://www.ushanga.fi)

Activity dates:  
26/06/2009 – 21/07/2009  
(four weeks)

 **IRELAND:** Andrea, 20 years / Megan, 18 yrs /  
Sam, 19 years

 **ESTONIA:** Kadri, 17 years / Liina, 17 years

 **FINLAND:** Hanna, 21years / Miika, 22 years

 **ITALY:** Stefano, 30 years

 **LATVIA**



## ◀◀ CHALLENGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN CESIS, LATVIA

Andrea (20 years) from Ireland spent four weeks as a volunteer in Latvia (2009). She joined with seven other volunteers, Hanna (21 years) and Miika (22 years) from Finland, Stefano (30 years) from Italy, Kadri (17 years) and Liina (17 years) from Estonia and Megan (18 years) and Sam (19 years) from Ireland. All the volunteers were disadvantaged facing social and economic obstacles as well as having learning difficulties, behavioural problems, including substance abuse, and in one case suffering from a serious physical disability.

The host organisation, the Cesu Pieauguso Izglitibas Centrs, in Cesis (Latvia) is a government organisation that provides non-formal lifelong learning opportunities for anyone between the ages of 16 and 60. One of its priorities is to support young people who have experienced difficulties in integrating into adult and working life. The centre in Cesis is a member of the "To get there" network of organisations working in this field in different countries and which use volunteering as a tool to achieve social inclusion. This European-wide network provides a stable framework within which vulnerable young people can take part in volunteering in another country.

Andrea and the other volunteers took part in a project aimed at changing their attitudes towards the world of work and society in general by involving the young people in a variety of different activities, including physical work. They helped to clear and maintain nature trails, worked on an organic farm where they lived under canvas and witnessed how Latvians lived 100 years ago. They helped the farmer cut grass, rake hay, pick berries and make jam. For some this was their first glimpse of rural life. In their leisure time, so as to learn about Latvian culture, its history and traditions, they visited museums and a heritage site where they baked their own rye bread. Returning to Cesis they prepared and enacted a street animation on environmental topics which was the first time that such a performance took place in this town. There was an overwhelming response from the local people.

The experience taught the volunteers a great deal, personally, practically and creatively. From a personal point of view there were improvements in their self-confidence, self-control, interpersonal communication and problem-solving skills. Most importantly, however, the change of attitude they describe in their own reports was remarkable, from one which reflected a problematic past to one which looked far more positively at life and its opportunities. On the practical side they learned how to bake bread and make jam and they also learned about environmental issues and the animal world. The street animation showed them they were capable of creating an activity appreciated by the general public. Throughout their volunteering the role of mentors from their hosting organisation was crucial.

There was general approval of the work of the volunteers and the director of the nature trails wishes to continue inviting volunteers in the future. The hosting organisation intends to use this project as a resource in developing other European Voluntary Service projects for disadvantaged young people.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

“One year on the European Voluntary Service programme was a University of Life for me, a practical university that I continue now. I learned so many things, I built new life values. I understood what I want from life, how I want to live and spend my time. I learned how to be strong and confident. How to follow my goals!” (Jevgeniia, 22)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Lithuania

Hosting organisation:  
The Centre for Voluntary Youth Activities “Deineta”  
[www.deineta.lt](http://www.deineta.lt)

Sending organisations:  
NGO “Union Forum” [www.union-forum.org](http://www.union-forum.org)  
Maailmanvaihto ry, ICYE Finland  
[www.maailmanvaihto.fi](http://www.maailmanvaihto.fi)  
League of Youth Voluntary Service [www.lyvs.bn.by](http://www.lyvs.bn.by)  
JTM 35 Association Jeunes à travers le Monde  
[www.international-jtm.com](http://www.international-jtm.com)  
AFSAI [www.afsai.it](http://www.afsai.it)  
IFAP, Institut für Angewandte Pädagogik e.V.  
[www.ifap-apolda.de](http://www.ifap-apolda.de)  
AFAIJ [www.afaij.org](http://www.afaij.org)  
ADVIT/ ICYE Moldova [www.icye.org](http://www.icye.org)  
The League of Young Voluntary Georgians LYVG  
Youth office in Nykarleby [www.nykarleby.fi](http://www.nykarleby.fi)  
HUJ, Voluntary Service of Armenia [www.huj.am](http://www.huj.am)

Activity dates:  
15/09/2008 – 15/09/2009  
(12 months)

**GERMANY:** Isa Dorothea, 19 years

**FINLAND:** Patricia, 19 years / Inger, 22 years

**FRANCE:** Pierre, 21 years

**ITALY:** Annunziata, 28 years

**SPAIN:** Pablo, 26 years

**ARMENIA:** Anna, 22 years

**BELARUS:** Diana, 23 years

**GEORGIA:** Ninu, 25 years

**MOLDOVA:** Julia, 27 years / Tatiana, 24 years

**UKRAINE:** Jevgeniia, 22 years

**LITHUANIA**



## ◀◀ THE UNIVERSITY OF LIFE IN KAUNAS, LITHUANIA

Pablo (26 years) from Spain joined 11 other young people to spend a year (2008/09) working as a volunteer in Lithuania. The other young people were: Isa Dorothea (19 years) from Germany, Pierre (21 years) from France, Annunziata (28 years) from Italy, Patricia (19 years) and Inger (22 years) both from Finland, Jevgeniia (22 years) from Ukraine, Diana (23 years) from Belarus, Tatiana (24 years) and Julia (24 years) from Moldova, Anna (22 years) from Armenia and Ninu (25 years) from Georgia.

The Centre for Voluntary Youth Activities “Deineta” was established in Kaunas, Lithuania in 1988 to promote and organise schemes for youth volunteering. With a small staff of four it manages to run a wide range of European Voluntary Service projects in Lithuania and elsewhere, as well as short term summer camps.

Pablo and the other volunteers worked in different care centres in Kaunas and Jonava catering for refugees, children and young people with physical and mental disabilities, children from disadvantaged families and old people. They also worked on conservation in the Kurtuvėnai Regional Park which has its own natural ecosystem and whose recreational facilities are in constant need of maintenance and protection. In their leisure time they organised a number of social events which included decorating a Christmas tree in the pedestrian precinct in Kaunas, an international football match and a week long bike tour. They used all the events to involve local people and to promote volunteering.

At the end of their stay all the volunteers felt the experience had helped personal growth. They had become more confident and welcomed the practical experience of working with refugees and people in care. It was real life as opposed to the rather abstract world of their university studies. They had learned a lot about social work in Lithuania and through their frequent contact with the local population they had learned some of the local language. Living and working with an international group fostered a respect for difference and strengthened their European awareness. His experience in Lithuania helped Pablo to find employment in a care home in Spain following his European Voluntary Service.

The working methods of their hosts were enriched by the injection of different cultural approaches applied by the volunteers and their close involvement with the local communities brought a real sense of Europe to the people of Kaunas and the surrounding area.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

“It is a challenge to adapt to a new culture, a new way of life and it is a challenge to be the same you in a very different context, but the greatest challenges also carry the greatest rewards!” (Maria, 29)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Poland

Hosting organisation:  
Towarzystwo Opieki nad Niepełnosprawnymi  
w Ustroniu  
[www.niepelnosprawniustron.pl](http://www.niepelnosprawniustron.pl)

Sending organisation:  
Youth Initiative Center  
[www.yic.info.am](http://www.yic.info.am)

Activity dates:  
01/09/2009 – 31/08/2010  
(12 months)



ARMENIA: Maria, 29 years



POLAND



## ◀◀ MAKING LIFE HAPPIER FOR THE DISABLED IN USTROŃ, POLAND

Maria (29 years) is from Armenia and had previously visited the centre for disabled children and young people in Poland before she started her year-long service there as a volunteer in 2009/10. Her sending organisation in Armenia was the Youth Initiative Centre.

The Education and Rehabilitation Centre is located in Ustroń, a health resort town in Silesia, southern Poland. The Centre is run by the Polish Association for the Care of Disabled People and provides support and education for 38 disabled children, young people and adults. It serves the needs of a wide range of disabilities and is very well-equipped for various activities, including swimming, horse-riding and running workshops for music, theatre and painting.

Following a Polish language course and familiarisation with her new surroundings, Maria lost no time in becoming fully involved in the life of the Centre. Her previous experience working with disabled children in Armenia was invaluable and her sunny, energetic disposition made her popular with the whole community. She assisted staff in regular daily routines and helped prepare computer exercises and art, music and hydro-therapy classes.

Through her work at Ustroń, Maria was able to gain useful experience in the field of disability and to develop new working methods with the support of specialists. She learned fluent Polish and was often invited to the homes of staff members where she learned more about Polish traditions and was proud to talk about her own country. She greatly improved her communicative skills and sense of her own identity.

The Centre and its residents greatly benefited from having such a likeable and enthusiastic volunteer. They were also able to benefit from the examples of different ways of doing things that Maria had used in her previous experience working with the disabled in Armenia.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

“When you are stranger in a strange country, but you never felt alone, when you are out of money but you have never felt poor, when you cannot explain what you feel, but this emotion makes you so happy and peaceful, then you start evolving... That is how I experienced my European Voluntary Service.” (Timotheos, 30)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Slovenia

Hosting organisation:  
Zavod za usposabljanje Janeza Levca  
[www.zujl.si](http://www.zujl.si)

Sending organisations:  
TANDEM  
SOS Kinderdorf,  
SOS Social Centre “Herman Gmeiner”  
[www.sos-ds.ba](http://www.sos-ds.ba)

Activity dates:  
01/02/2010 – 15/07/2010  
(ca. six months)



**GREECE:** Timotheos, 30 years



**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:** Aldin, 25 years



**SLOVENIA**



## « LEARNING THROUGH PLAY IN LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

Timotheos (30 years) from Greece and Aldin (25 years) from Herzegovina spent almost six months in 2010 working as volunteers in the Janez Levec Special Education Centre in Ljubljana. Timotheos had tried various jobs since completing his studies and had set up his own software business before leaving for Slovenia.

The Janez Levec Special Education Centre in Ljubljana, Slovenia, cares for children and young people with mental disabilities or who have learning or behavioural problems and for these reasons are often excluded from society. Inviting young volunteers from other countries was a successful way of giving the young people in their care the opportunity to learn about different cultures. They could also take part in discussions about democratic values and human rights.

Timotheos and Aldin took part in the daily time-table of classes and assisted the staff with the organisation of leisure time activities for the residents of the centre, such as a football tournament, an art competition and a festival. They used learning through play methods adapted for the special needs of the young people. The games were developed as a pedagogical tool to combat xenophobia e.g. during the festival *Play with me* which gave the young people in the care the opportunity to mix freely with children and young people of the same age from the local community.

Taking part in the life of the centre gave the young volunteers an insight into the rights and educational needs of children and young people in their care. They also learned a lot about the pedagogical approach developed for special needs children which would be of value to them for their future career prospects. Their technical skills also improved by making the film and producing an exhibition of photographs at the end of their stay.

The presence of the two volunteers had a positive impact on the residents of the centre, both students and staff. They appreciated the contribution the volunteers made to broaden their outlook and European awareness. Timotheos became so interested in special education that he has remained in Slovenia to continue volunteering his help to the centre; he also took part in last year's festival *Play with me*.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

“Finland gave me a wonderful chance to progress not only as a professional, but also as an individual.” (Zrinko, 24)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Finland

Hosting organisations:  
Myllylähde-yhteisö  
Lyhty ry [www.lyhty.net](http://www.lyhty.net)  
Ruskeasuon koulu [www.ruskis.fi](http://www.ruskis.fi)

Sending organisations:  
HELP [www.helponline.hr](http://www.helponline.hr)  
Egyesek Ifjúsági Egyesület [www.egyesek.hu](http://www.egyesek.hu)  
Akdeniz University European Affairs Office  
[www.akdeniz.edu.tr/int](http://www.akdeniz.edu.tr/int)  
CVJM Schlesische Oberlausitz e.V.  
[www.cvjm-schlesien.de](http://www.cvjm-schlesien.de)

Activity dates:  
06/08/2008 – 05/08/2009  
(12 months)



**CROATIA:** Zrinko, 24 years



**GERMANY:** Bianca, 23 years



**HUNGARY:** Zsuzsa, 18 years



**TURKEY:** Firat, 24 years



**FINLAND**



## ◀◀ WORKING WITH THE DISABLED IN LYHTY, FINLAND

Already a volunteer with “Help” in his home town of Split in Croatia, Zrinko (24 years) was fascinated by Finnish hard rock music and decided to take a university course in Finnish. Before long he was volunteering to work in a centre in Lyhty, Finland, caring for the disabled. He spent a year there (2008/09) working alongside other volunteers from around Europe: Zsuzsa (18 years) from Hungary, Bianca (23 years) from Germany and Firat (24 years) from Turkey.

The centre in Lyhty provides work experience for the disabled in a creative learning environment. It regularly hosts volunteers to give them the chance of sharing their lives with disabled children and young people and of learning about disability and the innovative methods used in care for the disabled in Finland.

Zrinko’s interest in music and ability to play the guitar created strong bonds with the disabled young people and during their leisure time he helped to stage a full-scale concert, called the “Freak Circus”, that played for five nights to full houses in the city centre of Helsinki. He also helped out in the workshops, guiding the disabled through various tasks such as woodworking, laying concrete, gardening and using a snow plough.

Volunteering in Finland heralded a new life for Zrinko and confirmed in him his fascination for its culture and its people. His interest in social work and an outgoing personality helped to integrate him in the community. He decided to stay on in Finland after volunteering and to follow a course in nursing at the University of Laurea. He also continues his social work as an employee at the centre at Lyhty where he was a volunteer.

The host organisation and the young disabled in its care benefited in many ways from the presence of their young Croatian volunteer. Not only did he bring them an awareness of a country at the other end of Europe but his love of their music and his own musical ability created a congenial learning environment.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

“My European Voluntary Service was a perfect gift for me. It changed my life. Working with the disabled I learned many things about life and I learned about me. It gave me self-confidence and the courage to do new things. I now want to find work with the disabled in Turkey.” (Neslin, 23)

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Sweden

Hosting organisation:  
Sundsvalls Kommun/Kultur&Fritid/  
Ungdomsavd./FFA  
[www.ffasundsvall.se](http://www.ffasundsvall.se)

Sending organisation:  
Tüm Renkler Eski Avrupa Gönüllü Hizmeti  
Gönüllülerinin Gençlik Derneği  
[www.trexevs.com](http://www.trexevs.com)

Activity dates:  
01/09/2009 – 31/08/2010  
(12 months)

 **TURKEY:** Neslin, 23 years

 **SWEDEN**



## « CHEERING UP THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SUNDSVAL, SWEDEN

Neslin (23 years), a graduate of Uludağ University in her native Turkey, spent a year (2009/10) as a volunteer with disabled young people in Sweden.

The hosting organisation was the Youth Department of the Municipality of Sundsväl in Sweden, which is responsible for the development of youth activities at the various recreational and club houses and rehearsal rooms in the town. It encourages young people's own initiative in running activities and offers them facilities provided by the town. One of its responsibilities is the youth club where recreational activities are organised for young people with disabilities.

Neslin's job at the youth club became easier, once she had progressed in her Swedish and English. When she arrived in Sundsväl she had competence in neither language and this was her first visit abroad. She worked with young people at the youth club who were both disabled and able-bodied. She also organised after-school activities for mentally disabled teenagers and simple arts and crafts for children. She was involved with other members of staff in outdoor activities, such as camping and sporting competitions, including a hockey match with the disabled group to which local people were invited. Her own special project was to run a monthly disco for young people at the youth club.

Her year in Sundsväl has left a deep impression on Neslin and she left the town fully intending to find work with the disabled on her return to Turkey. She discovered a part of Europe unknown to her before and worked with people who had a very different way of life from hers. She also gained in self-confidence and learned to take decisions. Finally, her communicative skills clearly benefited from the intensive language course, which she attended in her first months in Sundsväl.

The Youth Department's policy in employing the services of volunteers from other countries is to give young people in Sundsväl a greater awareness and acceptance of other cultures. Neslin brought her new perspectives to the young people in her care and her different work style broadened the experience of her colleagues.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

**“I can really recommend the European Voluntary Service to everybody! It is the perfect opportunity to deal with yourself as a person, to get to know what is important for you and what values you have in your life.” (Lena, 29)**

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Norway

Hosting organisation:  
Peder Morset folkehøgskole  
[www.pedermorset.no](http://www.pedermorset.no)

Sending organisations:  
Jugendhilfe und Sozialarbeit e.V. [www.jusev.de](http://www.jusev.de)  
Experiment e.V. [www.experiment-ev.de](http://www.experiment-ev.de)  
Code-X International [www.code-international.nl](http://www.code-international.nl)  
Fundación EDE [www.fundacionede.org](http://www.fundacionede.org)  
Verein 4YOUgend [www.4yougend.at](http://www.4yougend.at)

Activity dates:  
01/09/2008 – 31/08/2009  
(12 months)



**GERMANY:** Marcel, 22 years / Lydia, 19 years



**THE NETHERLANDS:** Carolien, 25 years



**SPAIN:** Joseba, 24 years



**AUSTRIA:** Lena, 29 years



**NORWAY**



## « HELPING THE INTEGRATION OF DISABLED STUDENTS IN SELBUSTRAND, NORWAY

Carolien (25 years) from the Netherlands spent a year (2008/09) as a volunteer in Norway with four other young people: Marcel (22 years) and Lydia (19 years) from Germany, Joseba (24 years) from Spain and Lena (29 years) from Austria.

Their host in Norway was the Peder Morset Folkehøgskole in Selbustrand, a boarding school for over 18 year olds, most of whom have some form of mental disability. The policy of the school is based on the principle of integration, where disabled students live and learn alongside other students in integrated groups. The students who are not disabled benefit from the integrated classes and from the many activities the school organises, such as art and handicraft, theatre events and outdoor activities e.g. horse riding and skiing. The school is a pioneer in this approach to integration which it hopes will become more wide-spread.

The volunteers were given a large measure of responsibility, initially assisting teachers in class but then, with more experience, taking the classes themselves. They also played a major part in organising art and handicraft and outdoor activities. They were given a free hand to develop their own projects.

The trust the school put in the volunteers encouraged their commitment to the students and had a very positive impact on their self-esteem and decision-making skills. They learned teaching techniques and took part in the debates about the integration of the disabled in society for which the school is such a notable exponent. They also learned Norwegian and improved their communication skills in English. The experience helped them to grow personally and to become more open-minded about cultural difference. It also greatly improved their job prospects.

The school recognised the value of receiving volunteers from other countries in Europe. Their approach to working with the disabled students was more natural than is usually possible in the normal teacher-student relationship. They widened the horizons of the students and staff with their different interpretations of disability and ways of thinking. They also had a multiplier effect in helping to spread across Europe the ideals of the school and its examples of good practice in the education of the disabled.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

**“The aim is to promote the development of a civil and democratic society based on a culture of non-violence, ethnic tolerance and a respect for human rights.”  
(Youth Peace Group “Danube”)**

Project funded by  
the Youth in Action national agency in:  
Croatia

Hosting organisation:  
Youth Peace Group “Danube”  
[www.ypgd.org](http://www.ypgd.org)

Sending organisation:  
Regionalne Centrum Wolontariatu  
w Gdańsku  
[www.wolontariat.org.pl](http://www.wolontariat.org.pl)

Activity dates:  
07/07/2009 – 31/08/2009  
(seven weeks)



**POLAND:** Krzysztof, 22 years



**CROATIA**



## ◀◀ WORKING FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN VUKOVAR, CROATIA

Krzysztof (22 years), reading a degree in history and Slavic studies at Gdańsk University in his native Poland, wanted very much to learn Croatian and to do something useful for other people. He chose to spend two months as a volunteer with the Youth Peace Group “Danube” in Vukovar in 2009, an ancient city in Croatia on the border with Serbia.

Vukovar was devastated during the war in 1990 and still faces tensions today between the Serbian and Croatian communities who make up the majority of the local population. The Youth Peace Group “Danube” was set up, as its name suggests, to combat intolerance and violence by promoting respect for diversity and by working towards better understanding between all the young people of the area. Their long term aim is to bring young people together in a multi-ethnic, multicultural environment and to this end they have helped to create a national youth programme.

Krzysztof’s main task was to assist with the annual summer camp for young people. The fact that he was not from the region made him more easily acceptable to young people from both communities and he became a popular youth leader. His work also took him into local youth clubs in the city and the surrounding rural area where he was able to meet up with a youth group from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Krzysztof managed to learn to speak Croatian almost fluently. By communicating with children and young people he learned a lot about the historical background of the recent conflicts which had so traumatised the population. The experience improved his social skills and self-confidence and he felt proud to be making a contribution to helping young people in this troubled community.

The best advocate for the work of the organisation was Krzysztof himself through his personality and contacts with young people. He brought ideas from another part of Europe to the work of the Peace Group and helped to trigger a re-think in the way they organised their activities. His successful contribution to the work of the hosting organisation strengthened its commitment to volunteering. The local community also clearly benefited from the presence of the introverted young man from Gdańsk who moved quietly among them promoting dialogue and mutual understanding.

## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

**“For a young person it is very important to live this kind of experience. It made me more open, more tolerant and more ambitious to accomplish important things in my life.”**  
**(Costica, 26)**

Project funded by the Education,  
Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency  
in Brussels

Hosting organisation:  
VIEWS  
[www.views.be](http://www.views.be)

Sending organisation:  
Pontes Association  
[www.pontes.ro](http://www.pontes.ro)

Activity dates:  
01/10/2009 – 15/02/2010  
(ca. five months)

 ROMANIA: Costica, 26 years

 BELGIUM



## « SHARING THE LIFE OF THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED IN LIÈGE, BELGIUM

Costica (26 years), from Romania, who is blind, spent almost five months (2009/10) as a volunteer helping in a school for visually impaired children in Liège, Belgium.

The hosting organisation VIEWS, is a European organisation, created in 2001, which groups 15 associations in various European countries cooperating on a number of projects concerned with visual impairment. VIEWS' members are parents, professionals and academics directly affected or experts in the field. There are also an increasing number of young people, visually impaired and sighted, who promote solidarity and are involved in the activities.

Costica's voluntary service took place in the Institut Royal des Sourds-muets et des Aveugles (IRHOV) in Liège, a primary and secondary school for deaf and visually impaired children and young people aged three to 21 years. It also provides support to students who attend classes in regular schools, and carries out experimental programmes for children with impaired sensory disorders.

At a meeting with the parents, Costica proposed a number of free-time activities for the young people which included IT sessions, sporting events and cultural workshops. Other initiatives centred on Halloween, Santa Claus, Christmas and Chandeleur, a Belgian festival. The aim of running this programme was to show the young people and their parents that visual impairment does not stop a young person from being autonomous. By organising joint meetings Costica put a lot of emphasis on encouraging contacts between the families and the schools so that what was tried at school was fully supported by parents. He also taught Braille to some of the young people.

Costica learned to communicate with more confidence and to work in a team with people from different cultures. He became more independent, at the same time developing his social skills in spite of his shyness. Sharing his days with other visually impaired people taught him new perspectives on disability from the point of view of parents, teachers and the young people themselves. He also discovered the country and living in a neighbourhood with a number of immigrants he gained insights into issues concerning integration. The European Voluntary Service experience motivated him to get involved in youth work after returning to Romania.

The fact that a blind person was running activities in the school had an impact on the young visually impaired and their families. It helped to motivate the young people to undertake more ambitious activities and for the parents to become more involved in the school.

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## Youth in Action

**Youth in Action is the European Union programme** for all young people aged 15 to 28 (or in some cases 13 to 30). It enables more than 150 000 young people and youth workers every year to exercise non-formal learning mobility across the EU and in 140 countries beyond by getting involved in educational activities outside schools. With a budget of EUR 885 million for the period 2007–13, the programme helps young people to develop skills and fosters their active participation in society. It promotes in particular the inclusion of young people facing obstacles in their lives.

To achieve its objectives, the programme funds a wide variety of activities through five actions. The activities include exchanges, initiatives, democracy projects and a voluntary service. It also supports youth workers and youth organisations through training and networking, and promotes European cooperation in the youth field.

## Programme Actions

### ■ **ACTION 1: Youth for Europe**

Encourages young people's active citizenship, participation and entrepreneurship by supporting exchanges, initiatives and democracy projects.

### ■ **ACTION 2: European Voluntary Service**

Fosters young people's sense of solidarity and tolerance by voluntary activities abroad carried out for the benefit of local communities.

### ■ **ACTION 3: Youth in the World**

Promotes mutual understanding through exchanges and partnerships among young people and youth organisations across the world.

### ■ **ACTION 4: Youth Support Systems**

Helps youth workers and youth organisations improve the quality of their work.

### ■ **ACTION 5: European cooperation in the youth field**

Supports youth policy cooperation at European level, and facilitates dialogue between young people and policymakers.

Youth in Action: [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm)



### **Youth in Action 2007 – 10**

more than

**527 000**

**participants:**

**390 000**

**young people and**

**137 000**

**youth workers;**

**30 100**

**projects were selected  
to receive grants out of**

**61 000**

**applications submitted;**

**20 000**

**project promoters a year:**  
non-profit / non-governmental  
organisations, public bodies,  
informal groups of young  
people.





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Youth in Action: [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm)



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