



Report
Making a Difference
Youth Convention on Volunteering
Brussels, 21 May 2001

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Opening Speech

**Dr Göke Frerichs,
President of the European Economic and Social Committee**

Dear President Henrik Söderman, ladies and gentlemen, young friends from all over Europe, honoured guests,

On behalf of the European Economic and Social Committee, I would like to welcome you to this important conference being held here in Brussels today in the framework of the international year of volunteers. The European Economic and Social Committee (ESC) has existed as an advisory assembly



*Dr Göke Frerichs (President of the ESC), Henrik Söderman (President of the European Youth Forum),
Laura Gil (European Youth Forum, Bureau member)*

since its creation by the Treaties of Rome in 1957. As the only non-partisan assembly at the European level, the ESC is mainly responsible for advising the three legislative and executive institutions, i.e. the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission. European unification is not only a matter for the institutions and the politicians but is also for citizens who take an active part in Europe's economic, social and cultural life.

In addition to its advisory capacity, the ESC has assumed two mutually complementary functions. Firstly, its permanent concern is to gain broader support from organised civil society for European integration and have it participate more in that process. Secondly, the ESC aims to strengthen the role of organised civil society in countries outside the EU. This means in the future Member States (the candidate countries), in the countries of the Mediterranean (in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue), in the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (in the framework of ACP co-operation), in the countries of Latin America (in the framework of co-operation with MERCOSUR),

and also more recently in India. For that purpose, the ESC maintains a permanent dialogue with representatives of civil society organisations in these countries and promotes the creation of advisory structures in these states and world regions.

Organisations of young people and young people in the broadest sense, from children to students, young employees and young employers, are among the groups we represent. That is one of the reasons why I am particularly pleased you have gathered here in Brussels for the International Year of Volunteers to discuss relevant youth and youth policy issues, to exchange experiences and to devise models for the future.

Only a few days ago, the director of UNICEF, Carol Bellamy, urged policy makers to take better account of the interests of young people and involve them more in the decision-making process. At the beginning of its conference on youth affairs in Berlin, UNICEF presented an opinion poll suggesting that young people in European and Central Asian countries have little trust in their governments. When asked about role models or idols, only 2% mentioned a politician. Only 40% thought that elections might positively change the situation of their country. The answers to questions about recent changes and expectations for the future showed significant differences between young people in Western Europe and those in other countries. Almost 50% in Western Europe thought that living conditions had improved in the past decade, while only 40% of young people in Eastern Europe and in Asia were of this opinion. On the other hand, whereas half of Western Europe's young people think that they will be better off than their parents, almost two thirds of young people in other countries share this view. The UNICEF Conference in Berlin, representing 53 countries from Europe and Central Asia, will adopt a concluding document on the protection and promotion of children and youth as well as on health and education and protection from exploitation and violence. This will be the main objective of future efforts.

In this context we can say that we are eager to see the European Commission's White Paper on youth policy for which the ESC adopted an important Opinion. The European Economic and Social Committee, in co-operation with the European Youth Forum and the Commission, held a hearing on the White Paper, here in this room, with a high level of participation by experts and representatives of youth organisations from across Europe. Without the co-operation of youth organisations we cannot achieve these future goals. Your voluntary commitment and your co-operation deserve our respect and recognition. I would like to express this on behalf of my 232 colleagues in the Economic and Social Committee and also on my personal behalf. I'd really like to stress this.

I wish you all the best for your event. Also, I hope you enjoy your work together and realise that you are working for your own future and for the future of youth around the world. I will do everything that I can to ensure that we are ready to pass the torch on to you when the time comes. We need to work for social justice, solidarity, peace, responsibility and awareness of our responsibility towards life and the environment. We need to work on the basis of solid values in Europe. It is with great interest that we take part in the very topical debate on the ethical responsibilities of mankind. We are looking at your future and our future. It is the future of a community of values based on Christian values, and I think we should not forget this. So I do wish you all the best for your work today and your work in the future. Thank you very much Mr Söderman for your patience.

Opening Speech

Henrik Söderman
President of the European Youth Forum

President Frerichs, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends of the European Youth Forum,

The year 2001 has been declared the International Year of Volunteers. As young people, we consider volunteering both a way of shaping our environment and an opportunity for experiential learning. Volunteers make an extremely precious contribution to their neighbours, their communities and society at large. By the same token, volunteering helps young people acquire skills that the formal education system often fails to provide. These range from empathy to communication, intercultural awareness and team spirit.

Recent surveys show that young people are particularly active as volunteers, more than any other age group in society. The European Youth Forum wants to bring to the fore the extreme richness and variety of volunteer projects, which young people have set up and engage in across Europe. We would like to offer you the opportunity to enter into direct dialogue with young volunteers: to hear about their experiences, their struggles and the success of their projects.

A great number of volunteers have answered our call and thus we are able to present a very interesting mix of projects, with objectives, approaches and results as rich and diverse as our continent and its civil society. What unites them is the will of young people to participate in their community, to contribute to social justice and the sustainability of our society and its human values.

We in the European Youth Forum hope that the experiences and recommendations of young volunteers can also be included in the forthcoming European Commission White Paper on Youth Policy. We hope that the White Paper on Youth Policy will also improve the framework for young volunteers. We believe that a unified visa regulation for transnational projects should be adopted and that a legal status for volunteers should be established in the European Union. We hope that the White Paper on Youth Policy, together with the Mobility Action Plan adopted by the Nice European Council last December, will bring us one step closer to achieving this.

The European Youth Forum is very honoured to be able to welcome you here today. I would like to thank the volunteers who have come from all over Europe to be here in Brussels to present their interesting projects to us.

I would also like to thank the European Economic and Social Committee, in particular President Frerichs and Ms Sigmund from Group III, for the political support and for hosting us again in the ESC building. The Robert Bosch Foundation has provided generous financial support for the event, in addition to the support from the European Commission. I would also like to thank the Internet portal Euractiv.com for their help in publicising the event.

I am sure that we will all find the day inspiring and enriching. Thank you.

The International Year of Volunteers

Presented by Diana Perez-Buck,
United Nations Volunteers - IYV 2001 Team

Hello good morning to everybody, how are you? Good! I see a lot of smiles. I heard that the volunteers worked very hard until very late yesterday so I am really delighted to see you. I have seen your name on paper a lot and I am finally just delighted and excited to have a chance to see your faces and hear you today. It's clear that Brussels is also delighted by the fact that you are here because I have been



View on the old town of Brussels from the European Economic and Social Committee (ESC)

living in this city for a year and a half and I can tell you it rains and it's grey most of the time and look outside, the day is beautiful and it's one of the rare sunny days that the city has. So it's clear that all of us are just delighted that you are here, including the city of Brussels, so welcome!

What I was going to do first was to introduce myself and tell you where I am coming from and where I'm active and then give you an introduction on the International Year of Volunteers (IYV). What I wanted to do is to give you a general overview of what the year is and what it means and why we have such a year and then I'll give you some highlights, some examples of what young people across the world are doing to take advantage of the fact that the UN declared this year to promote volunteerism. I'm a member of a team called IYV 2001 and I belong to an organisation called United Nations Volunteers, which is the volunteer sending arm of the United Nations System. My organisation set up a very young team, I think our average age is probably 26 or so. Most of our team is in Bonn, I'm in Brussels and we also have a person in New York.

The International Year of Volunteers is this year, and it was an idea that had been circulating for quite some time among NGOs and civil society. In 1997, the UN General Assembly decided that this was a very important idea and in their meeting of November 20th 1997 they formally decided to proclaim 2001 as international year of volunteers. They chose 2001 for a reason, because it is the real first year of the new millennium. They wanted to convey the message that volunteerism is not only important but that it will be essential to addressing problems in the new millennium, so it was chosen with intention. All of the countries that you represent here supported the resolution, they endorsed it and in total there were 123 countries that actively supported this idea.

UN Volunteers was assigned the responsibility of helping promote the year and helping promote the ideals behind it, so that gave us a little more to do than we already had. But it's really an exciting project. Who is this year for? Basically for all types of volunteers, of all ages, i.e. young, old, middle aged, for all languages and cultures. And this is important because a year is a wonderful opportunity to bring attention to how many different manifestations of volunteerism there are, according to cultures: volunteering in Eastern Europe is not the same as volunteering in Africa and it's not the same as volunteering in the United States. So it's a really good opportunity to see the variety in volunteering across the world. It's also for volunteers of all kinds: no matter what you're doing as a volunteer, no matter whether you are serving in your own country or going to another country, whether you're serving alone, spontaneously as an individual volunteer or with an organisation, and whether you go occasionally or every day, every week. So it really tries to be as inclusive as possible. It's a year to recognise all types of volunteers. I will give you a test on this a bit later.

The four objectives of the IYV – they are objectives that the General Assembly of the UN established – serve as guidelines and each country is supposed to take these objectives as an orientation and then articulate them and adapt them to their own interest and idiosyncrasies. The four objectives are: *recognition*, which basically refers to the notion of bringing attention to just how much volunteers contribute and how many volunteers there are that we're not even aware of. *Facilitation*, making it easier for volunteers or for people to volunteer. *Networking*, the notion of encouraging volunteers to exchange ideas and experiences and best practice with each other within a country or between countries. *Promotion*: getting the idea out, the message out and trying to get as many people as possible interested in volunteering themselves.

Now if you think about it, we are actually getting to all these objectives today. In the first session we will be recognising the immense contribution that youth and young volunteers make to society and in the third session at the end we are going to look at how we can all facilitate volunteer activities, how governments for example can facilitate people volunteering in the future. We are certainly networking – we are going to be networking all day. And I think you [the volunteers who will present their projects] have already been networking throughout the weekend and I assume that with the fact that we are going to have a press conference, the fact that we are going to get the message out we will also be promoting the notion of volunteering after today. Young people worldwide have thought about these objectives and have thought of ways of putting these into action. Now, obviously what I am going to show you is not an exhaustive list, it is just some highlights of how young people are celebrating the year. We start with promotion and the first item I have here is one that we as the IYV Team are actually involved with. The Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan, has selected a number of people, a number of eminent persons as they are called, to promote volunteering and he asked the Crown Prince of Spain, Prince Felipe – who's young and who's been very involved with young people and with volunteering in Spain – to be an ambassador for volunteering in Spain and in the Spanish-speaking

world. I also chose Turkey as an example, because basically activities for the IYC in Turkey have been really mobilized by young people and it has been a really good example because it's been thanks to them that things have moved. One of the things they did was to set up a website and start a signature campaign to try to get as many signatures as possible, first from young people and then from other people to bring attention to just how many people volunteer in Turkey and many don't even realise that this is the case in the country.

Then the third example I chose was Denmark: this summer there is going to be a train travelling across



Diana Perez-Buck, United Nations Volunteers IYV 2001 Team

the Danish countryside promoting volunteering among youth. This is also something that other countries have chosen to do, and the volunteer train seems to be a popular idea. I also chose the example of Holland, where in September they are going to devote a whole day to recruitment and information of youth volunteers. And finally there are quite a few songs that have come up for the IYC. There was a pretty good reggae Caribbean song that is actually on our website [www.iyv2001.org], you can go and listen to it. Another one is by a group called Dreamz FM; this pop group in Singapore developed the song 'Bring out the Volunteer in you'. It's sort of a nice pop song and it's a group like you see here of young people. These are a few highlights of how young people are promoting volunteering in the context of this year.

I chose also some ideas under the category of networking, Basically I will talk in a moment about the idea of national committees, but all countries, or many countries around the world have moved to form these committees to promote the year. The one in England is unique in that it has a young people subgroup who is planning activities throughout 2001 and beyond to get more young people in England to volunteer and I have included the newsletter of that committee as an example. I have also included ourselves here today as an example of networking this year and I was looking at the website of Germany for the IYV. I saw they are going to organise a congress on youth voluntary service to enable

people interested in this to meet with each other to exchange ideas and to network basically. (...) The next example is in Brazil. There is a firm called 'Price Water House Coopers' and some of their younger employees who also volunteer have decided to launch a ribbon campaign where they ask other young employee volunteers to wear the ribbon and in so doing recognise the fact that they are employees who also take time to volunteer. The firm also gives their employees time off to volunteer.

Now we come to the last example.. The *Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly* issued a recommendation on improving the role and status of volunteers. This was an important move because there are 41 Member States in the Council of Europe and I included it because it recognises particularly the importance of young volunteers and youth volunteering. Finally, facilitation: we've been told that for this international year the government in Vietnam has moved to develop incentives for young people to volunteer, mostly in rural areas but also in general. So this is a way in which governments can facilitate volunteer activity. In El Salvador young volunteers really helped develop a database for this international year. When the earthquake struck, they were able to use it to mobilise volunteers very quickly. So that's a very good example of how they facilitated volunteer activity. Then I have included an example of the European Voluntary Service (EVS) programme – they have facilitated young people going as EVS volunteers to promote and use the IYV to promote volunteerism in their countries. Finally the New York City IYV Committee: they have a lot of activities for this year, it's really amazing. In Brooklyn, in Harlem, in Manhattan and one of the things I picked out of their list were these seminars that they have prepared for the whole year in order to facilitate mentoring young people by young volunteers. These are just a few highlights of the activities going on worldwide. In some countries there are more activities, in others there are fewer and the whole idea is that the year is only a platform. It's a way of getting started, and beyond 2001 we would like to see a lot of momentum and initiatives.

UNV has tried to make sure that the youth perspective is really brought to the forefront in the IYV. We are developing a CD-ROM on youth and volunteering and volunteer service and we are also launching an extended youth section in the IYV website. We already have one that has a lot of information but we want to develop it even more over the next few months. Natasha is going to be launching a Youth and Volunteering newsletter and we've also got some national UN Volunteers in a variety of countries. I just came back from Kazakhstan and we have some wonderful young people there who are specialised in promoting volunteering during the year. We are also trying to bring the message to international gatherings like in Dakar where, as you probably know, there is a big assembly for youth this year. UNV is going to make sure that those young people who can't make it to the Forum have a chance to participate online. So we are going to make sure that we set up some IT centres in order to give young people that possibility. Finally, I will give you the website address so you can consult the youth section, get some ideas and share some ideas with us.

More

- www.iyv2001.org
- United Nations Volunteers
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Postfach 260 111
D-53153 Bonn
Germany
- Recommendation (1496) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe:
<http://stars.coe.fr/ta/ta01/EREC1496.HTM>

The Robert Bosch Foundation and its manifesto on youth volunteering

Presented by Hanna Beate Schöpp-Schilling

It's a pleasure and privilege to be here today and to speak to you on behalf of the Robert Bosch Foundation. The Bosch Foundation is a large German private foundation associated with one of the larger companies in Germany. It was founded in 1964 and since then has given almost 900 million



Dr. Hanna Beate Schöpp-Schilling (Robert Bosch Foundation) with ESC President G. Frerichs

German marks [460 mil. Euro] for charitable or non-profit making projects and activities. I'm representing the Robert Bosch Foundation today and I'm speaking to you because in the last decade the Foundation has really made a tremendous effort to promote volunteer work and social and civic involvement. It started in 1993 shortly after the unification of Germany. It founded numerous self-help groups, initiatives and small associations in what is called in Germany the "new states", that is the territory of the former East Germany. And this was very important, because in East Germany as in most of the Central and Eastern European countries a free spirit of volunteering in a democratic environment had not been possible. Therefore the first step was to raise people's awareness. The Bosch Foundation has also been promoting voluntary service in Germany and in Europe and has established an award for humanitarian aid done on a voluntary basis in Central and Eastern Europe and it has instituted a prize for journalists who write on volunteerism.

However, the defining moment came in 1997 when the Bosch Foundation appointed an all-party commission of young German parliamentarians from the Federal Parliament and some older experts like myself with a view to discussing whether an initiative should be launched to expand voluntary service in Germany and if so, how. The so-called Bosch commission met for about a year. There was a very heated discussion, particularly between the older and younger members, on whether a voluntary service should be a 'voluntary voluntary service' or whether it should be an 'obligatory voluntary service'. I must admit it was the young people who won. A former civil rights movement representing women of the former East Germany came up with the argument 'I can't understand how you can educate people to engage in voluntary service throughout their lives if you force them to do it.' I thought this was very clever and by that time I gave up my obligatory standpoint. So the commission came out with the Bosch manifesto on volunteering in Europe with the wonderful title 'Youth renewing the fabric of society'.

The title is beautifully worded, because it puts the emphasis not on the kind of work that should be done in society but is not being done, but rather on the contribution that young people make to keep our societies alive – as previous speakers have said – on the creativity that young people can bring to our societies. Now the key message of the Bosch manifesto is that every young person must have the chance to do practical voluntary work for one year in a social, educational or cultural activity, for the environment or the cause of peace, for the community and also for her or his own benefit. And the second key message is opportunities for voluntary service should be available for young people in their

own country as well as in other countries of Europe. Therefore international volunteer programmes for young people are a valuable tool to promote international understanding and intercultural learning. As Mr Frerichs said, Europe is built upon Christian values. But in our global world we also need to understand the value systems of other peoples and other religions and this will come through intercultural understanding.

Now, just to give you some background information; why was it so necessary to discuss voluntary service at this time in Germany? Well, you may know that in a number of European countries, military service is no longer compulsory. Very often the so-called civilian service that had to be done by those young men who were conscientious objectors also no longer exists. All of a sudden you had this whole array of young men on your hands who used to be inducted into society through the military service. As a feminist I have to say that this is a rather patriarchal argument because nobody ever talked about how young women were inducted into society. So, in the Bosch commission, since there were almost 50% women that argument was quickly dismissed. But nevertheless there was a heated discussion in Germany at the time over whether to do away with compulsory military service. You may have read in the newspapers that the country's parliament has not decided to do away with it but to downscale it. Therefore the civilian service is also becoming less important. The second argument – and this has been mentioned by previous speakers – was that volunteerism is a way of strengthening the cohesion of society and we found this very important.

We also identified what we felt were four important areas in the life of a person: work, family, leisure time and friendships, and a person's contribution to society – i.e. volunteering. Unless you are introduced to volunteering at a very early age, you're never very likely to do it later on. We also felt that in Europe's rapidly ageing societies it was very important to establish a new contract between the steadily shrinking young generation and the older generation. Otherwise we tend to have two blocks and it's the old generation that determines the future of the young because they have the numerical majority and therefore the power.

We also felt that education and vocational guidance beyond what schools are able to offer are very important for young people in a year of voluntary service and we thought that a European dimension would be very important. We see young people building the bridges for tomorrow's Europe, a Europe consisting not only of the current countries of the European Union but also the countries lying further East and South.

Allow me just to make a short remark. There are a number of voluntary services in Germany at the moment. But after I have explained them to you, you will see why it is important to seek this expansion. Germany currently has what is called a voluntary social year and a voluntary ecological year. About twelve thousand people take part in this, mostly young women because the young men are doing compulsory military service or compulsory civilian service. The 12,000 people who do voluntary service during these two years are getting all sorts of privileges, benefits, insurance, pocket money and recognition when they go to university, etc. So they are really a very privileged group. Then you have the European Voluntary Service people who are now financed by the European Union, and they too have a few privileges. Like the first group, they can take advantage of educational days, seminars, language training, pocket money and a small insurance package. Finally, you have the so-called unregulated voluntary service represented by groups like International Christians for Europe, American Field Service, or 'Aktion Sühnezeichen' (Action Reconciliation), which was established in the 1950s. They do not receive anything. In fact, they have to look in many places to find the money to pay for their trip and other expenses. So in Germany you have two problems today: one, there is a much

greater demand from young people to go abroad to do voluntary service or to do voluntary service in Germany, but there are not enough places; two, you have three categories which are treated very differently and this is very unfair.

So, with its manifesto the people in the Bosch commission felt that a completely new approach had to be found to create more places for voluntary service and put everybody on equal footing. The new concept promoted in this wonderful little orange manifesto is based on a number of principles. First of all, voluntary services for young people should be voluntary services decided by young people. It is not the sponsors or organisations like the Red Cross who define where you should have the voluntary service. Instead, it is the creativity of the young people who must be able to identify and define their opportunities and decide where and for which purpose and in what form they want to do voluntary service. Secondly, we felt that young people should not only be able to do social work or ecological work but also work in museums, schools, in the field of sports and in the media. They must be able to work in areas that match their interests. Thirdly, we felt that there ought to be a variety of sponsors. Again this is a very German characteristic. In Germany, the so-called Third Sector is heavily subsidised by the government. With a welfare state moving into the 21st century, we will have to come to some sort of new agreement about the government on the one hand and the professional sector on the other. We must also reach an understanding on the civic sector, which should not be dependent on government alone for its funding, because that's quasi government, which makes it like a big tanker – you know how they move, hardly at all.

Another new concept that was introduced was that every volunteer should have a mentor. Why did we come up with this? Again, in Germany where we currently have the year for social work and ecological work, the law stipulates that these young volunteers must receive 25 or 30 so-called 'educational days'. We felt that these educational days, however valuable they may be, had become the sacred domain of all those psychologists and pedagogically trained people who feel that it is their livelihood. I definitely don't want to take that away from them, but the system as such was no longer suitable. We felt that each younger volunteer had to be able to choose a mentor: either a person just finishing volunteer work or an older person. That mentoring person - different from the person who introduces the volunteer to his or her work –should be there to help solve conflicts and problems. So this is a very important new idea.

The next idea was to provide every volunteer with a DM 900 voucher [460 euros] that could be used to buy insurance and for spending money. This way the volunteer can 'shop around' for a sponsor instead of a situation where the sponsor is sitting there with the money and looking for the volunteer. Here we return to the idea of creativity, which I mentioned in the beginning. But we also felt that the volunteers should benefit from a bonus system and in the end receive a certificate describing the kind of work they did and the exact skills they acquired. This is an incentive and it will help them in the period after their voluntary work, whether they decide to go back to school or get a job. The last point is that the Bosch manifesto stated the need for innovative funding, combining government, business and private sources.

After publishing its manifesto, launching a large-scale campaign and asking the former President of Germany, Professor Roman Herzog, to write to numerous trade unions, employers associations and political organisations for their reaction - which by the way was very favourable - the Bosch Foundation thought that since it wrote the manifesto it should practice what it was preaching. So in 1998 the Bosch Foundation was quick to introduce new areas of funding in its programme. What is good about a private foundation is that it can start funding a project it considers important and sees as changing

society, in the hope of creating momentum and generating support from other sectors and forces in society. Since 1996, the Bosch Foundation has appropriated almost DM 9 million for voluntary service projects.

One of the three major programmes is between Germany and Central and Eastern European countries. To date, more than 50 projects and over 500 volunteers have been funded through large and small German and international organisations with their partners in Central and Eastern Europe who engage in exchanges of volunteers. At present, there are more volunteers going to Central and Eastern Europe than are coming to Germany. However, they are introducing the people of these countries to the idea of volunteering in an ideology free framework. I have a very moving anecdote to share with you. One of the projects is in St. Petersburg, and volunteers help there in a hospital for severely handicapped children. In the beginning, the doctors and staff were very suspicious and wondered why those German volunteers wanted to come there. For the medical people, it was already very unpleasant, difficult work, and very low paid, but they reached the conclusion that the volunteers had such boring lives that they wanted to come here and do that kind of work. So you can imagine the kind of awareness-raising we have to do for people to understand what volunteering is.

The second programme is being run in the former East Germany. Here the Bosch Foundation has granted funding of almost DM 19 million [9.7 million euros] over the last decade for the launching of social groups and initiatives in villages and cities, and now these groups and citizens' initiatives are also 'employing' volunteers. This programme is in its second phase, with something like 100 projects and 200 volunteers. The third programme is in Western Germany and there are more than 100 volunteers working there. These are the practical results of the manifesto.

The Bosch Foundation is trying to introduce a new kind of voluntary service where large government grants are no longer the norm. It has also published a handbook and guide for the smaller initiatives and associations on how to organise voluntary work, find volunteers, treat them and draw up agreements with them. What is more, the Bosch Foundation has been working with a professor from the University of Dresden to develop a method for the evaluation of sponsors taking in volunteers where both the volunteer's work and the sponsor's work is evaluated on the basis of scientific criteria. This avoids exploitation of the volunteer and ensures that the certification that the volunteer gets at the end of his/her volunteer year will be of some value. Now I thought that the previous speaker might quote Kofi Annan. But since she didn't, I will turn from the Bosch Foundation, which considers itself within this framework of the IYV, and quote Mr Annan. In his opening speech for the IYV, he said the following words which I think are very moving 'At the heart of volunteerism are the ideas of service and solidarity and the belief that together we can make a better world.' It is in this spirit that we would like to conduct this conference, and the Bosch Foundation, which I represent, is happy to be here. Thank you.

More

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- The manifesto "Youth renewing the fabric of society" is available in English and German from the above address.

A. "Volunteering - What's in it for Society?"

Moderation and Opening Statement: Diana Perez Buck, UNV

We now have our first session of the conference and will finally be able to hear our volunteers who are present. I am really delighted to welcome you to the first session on this very important theme 'Volunteering - What's in it for Society?' And I think that this is a wonderful opportunity to explore and



Volunteers during the preparatory seminar, the weekend before the Convention.

discuss some of the very important and countless benefits - often unknown - of volunteer activity. The benefits are both tangible and intangible and we will learn about them today as we listen to our volunteers. Of course, while most people think that volunteering is a good thing, I don't think we realise just how true this is. This session is based on the premise that volunteering has some very fundamental social but also economic benefits. It helps build strong, cohesive and stable communities. In addition, it encourages solidarity, reciprocity and stronger economies. I think that both socially and economically the benefits of volunteering need to be recognised, and we must focus on these. With our four volunteers here we are going to have a chance to see just how much young volunteers contribute to the welfare of societies.

THE BET – A European Campaign against Climate Change

Presented by Henni Olbrecht

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Henni Olbrecht and I'm from Germany. I am on a voluntary ecological year and I'm going to present to you the campaign I have been working on since last August. I will just give you a brief idea of what this campaign is and how it came about and developed into what it is today. I will also explain what we are doing to implement it.



The name of the campaign is 'The Bet', and it's Europe-wide. It is for youth and run by youth and is part of the fight against climate change. It involves a massive network of more than 150 young volunteers ages 17 to 27 who want to act against climate change. 'The Bet' enables a large group of young people concerned about their future to share experiences, knowledge and cultures. Together with thousands of young people from more than 16 European countries, we are going to try and reduce our energy consumption. And the bet we have made - which is how we got the name of our campaign - is that 'at least 88 schools and universities from at least 8 European countries will reduce their CO2 emissions by 8% within 8 months, and we will reduce our CO2 emissions by a total of 8 million kg within 8 months.'

Of course, to make a bet you need someone to bet with. In our case that someone is the European Commission, in the person of Environment Commissioner Margot Wallström, who agreed to our bet. If she loses, she will have to ride her bike for one month for all of her meetings in Brussels. If we lose, we'll have to take her to her meetings in a rickshaw for a whole week. The purpose of all this is obviously to show that we don't want to use cars, and that we want to promote energy conservation. The official period of the bet is 8 months, running from 22 November of last year to 22 July 2001. By the end of this period we'll need somebody to decide whether we've won or lost. So our referee will be the European Environmental Agency in Copenhagen. Their climate experts and others will decide on the basis of the data we send them whether we've won our bet.

For our campaign, we have set up national teams, representing the 16 countries taking part in 'The Bet'. On the map here you see 17 countries because Slovakia just joined this year. So we've got 16 countries from Sweden to Portugal and Bulgaria. All the national teams have a bet office and they maintain contacts with the schools in their countries. At the European level, we have a co-ordination office in Berlin where I work and which is staffed by an international team. In addition to me there is a Dutchman, an Englishman and another German. Our job at the co-ordination office is to ensure the flow of information between the national teams and to co-ordinate the so-called working groups. We have working groups that are responsible for our website, scientific aspects, design, and the conferences in which we are participating, such as the climate conference in The Hague and the upcoming one in Bonn.

How did we come up with this idea? As Mr Frerichs said, there are young people who don't trust politicians and they're sick and tired of the endless discussions and debates. As most of you probably know, the Kyoto protocol was concluded in 1997. In it, Germany agreed to reduce its emissions by 10% over a period of 7 years. Some young people in Germany thought that this would take ages and would not work, saying it was a lot of hot air. So they decided to bet they could beat the German government and reach the Kyoto target much faster. They bet they could reduce emissions by 10% in

7 months and actually won their bet. This gave them the idea to go on and to use their experience for a European wide campaign. So, in June 1999 a first co-ordination meeting was held in Cologne with already 12 countries. Then in October 1999 our European co-ordination office was opened in Berlin. In the spring of 2000 additional co-ordination meetings were held to discuss more general aspects such as the design of the campaign, the criteria for the bet, ways to promote the idea and reach the press. In August at a meeting in Denmark, 16 countries from across Europe decided they wanted to join 'The Bet'.

As you may know, countries from across the world met last year in The Hague for the largest world climate conference ever, in preparation for the signing of the Kyoto protocol. At this conference, because we are trying to achieve environmental goals and working against climate change, we decided to hold a press conference with our 'opponent', Ms Wallström. We also signed the bet at this time and officially shook hands to get the ball rolling. This year we have had two so-called interim meetings to discuss what's going right and what's going wrong since we began. Another high point in our campaign was in April when we embarked on a five-week tour of schools in 8 European countries. There we met with students to discuss climate change and explain our campaign. The bet will officially end in July when the next climate conference is held in Bonn and we will hold a press conference at that time to announce it. In August and September we'll commemorate the end of the bet with a final event in Luxembourg at 'The Bet Climate Week'. There we will hold workshops, have an evaluation and also hold a final press conference.



Henni Olbrecht, presenting the European Climate Change Campaign 'The Bet'

Perhaps you're wondering how we plan to meet our goal of 8%? Our criteria are of 2 kinds: 8% less CO₂ in 8 months and 8 million kilos less of CO₂ in 8 months. We hope to achieve the 8% savings primarily in heating and electricity. So we are asking schools during the 8 months to do certain things like turn down the heat when the windows are open and so on. At the end of the 8-month period, we'll ask them to check their meters for heating and electricity and compare their readings with last year's figures and then we'll see if we've reached our goal of 8% or not. As for the 8 million kilos of CO₂, we'll try to reach that goal through individual activities. For each country we're using 'saving cheques'. They're in the different languages and with the appropriate figure for each country. Schools or individual pupils can fill the cheques out and send them to their national office. For instance, a reduction in use of one aluminium can is a savings of 0.35 kilogram of CO₂. Or if for a period of 5 months somebody takes the bus to work instead of the car, they will save 463 kilos of CO₂. These are just some of the ways people can save energy. There is a whole range of possibilities. Essentially, the idea behind our campaign is that we are tired of hearing politicians just talk. We want to take action and are offering young people an interesting project and a chance to get involved in political and environmental

questions. But of course it's not just work. It's also a lot of fun. Before this all started I wasn't very politically active, but now that's changed. I am quite involved. This entire campaign is only possible because of all the volunteers who have become involved across Europe. Thanks.

More

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- NB: The bet was won! On September 7th the European Environment Agency declared, "that 88 schools and universities in 13 European countries had won a bet with the European Commissioner for the Environment Margot Wallström that they could reduce their CO2 emissions by at least 8 % in at most 8 months." (Source: <http://org.eea.eu.int/news/Ann1000108460>)

GENDERS: Training and Capacity Building against the Trafficking of Young Women in the Baltic Sea Region

Presented by Natalija Jurkova

Good morning everybody, it's a real pleasure to be here. My name is Natalija Jurkova. I am going to present the project of Training and Capacity Building against the Trafficking of Young Women and Girls in the Baltic Sea Region. I am very interested in this problem. I like my job as volunteer in the organisation because the problem is very acute. Our organisation is called GENDERS and is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation. It was founded in 1994 in Riga (Latvia) and we became a legally registered NGO in 1996. The main aims of GENDERS are to develop preventive strategies and measures to fight AIDS, to study the situation of prostitutes, to take action against the trafficking of women, to lobby policy makers to improve the legal situation of women. We have many partners who work with us and help publish information about our organisation and project. Only recently we published these booklets and badges [shows them], which were funded by the United States embassy in Latvia. They all focus on the problem of trafficking.

Training and Capacity Building against the Trafficking of Young Women and Girls in the Baltic Sea Region is a project of the Women's Forum Foundation in Sweden (Kvinnoforum) and is partly funded by the European Commission's DAPHNE initiative and the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It started in November 1999 and is based on the needs and problems identified in a previous cooperation project called "Crossing borders against Trafficking in Women and Girls", between the NGO, MONIKA, in Finland, GENDERS in Latvia and the Women's Forum Foundation in Sweden.



Natalija Jurkova from GENDERS, the Latvian youth NGO working against the trafficking of young women.

The basic aim of the project is to give better support to local NGOs interested in working with women who fall victim to trafficking or are at risk of doing so. Also, the project seeks to develop the network between these organisations, concerned with the problem in the Baltic Sea Region. We are trying to achieve our aims and objectives by setting up national focal points in Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Denmark. These will operate as resource centres and co-ordinate the national NGO work on trafficking, communicating the activities to other focal points, the media and the general public. Combating trafficking in each country is very difficult. The work of a national focal point is to analyse these problems and suggest a good way to focus their work. Another objective is to design and implement workshops in each participating country for NGOs, providing important methods and facts for the fight against trafficking in women. We organise seminars where we inform and teach people about this problem. Last summer we organised one in Latvia. While we were preparing the seminar, we found out that there were only two persons in the State police interested in and responsible for problems relating to prostitution and trafficking in Latvia. The specialists of the consular department of the Foreign Affairs Ministry and other officials only have a very vague idea of the problem of trafficking and prostitution. We heard remarks like 'it's not our problem, we don't know about it, it's your problem'. They know nothing about the problem and don't understand the issues.

To give you an example, let me read you a letter from a young Latvian woman: *'My name is Kesia, I was living with my mum and sister in a small town in Latvia, attending the vocational school for hairdressers. It is very hard to get a job in my town. I needed money, our life was very difficult. My friends from elementary school told me that there was a job opportunity somewhere in Germany. It was supposed to be a job in a restaurant kitchen or somewhere like that. It was a chance for me to earn money. My friend introduced me to two men. In the evening we crossed the border. One of the men took my*

passport and he told me that it would be safe like that. We stopped for a night in a motel. They locked the door to my room and forced me to undress. They tied me to the bed. They raped me several times and one of them took pictures. The next day we reached a big house. I met another Polish girl over there. She told me that I had been sold to an exclusive club for men. There were a dozen or so women in the club. Polish, Czech, Ukrainian. The owner of the club had bought them and he treated them like his own private property. When I refused to come down to the bar in the evening I was beaten. They showed me pictures taken in the motel and blackmailed me, saying that they would send them to my mum if I did not obey them. One of the men came close to me and started to kiss me and touch me. I was about to vomit but the way they were looking at me I knew that I would have to go with him upstairs. Now they keep me locked up, I'm not allowed to go outside, I have no passport. They told me that if I tried to escape, they would kill me and throw my body into the water. They also told me that it didn't make sense to contact the police because they were bribed. What can I do?

So we inform government organisations in order to prevent this problem, because it is terrible. At this seminar, we established new contacts with organisations like the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Youth Department of Justice, the Criminal Division and so on. These contacts were very important for the development of our network, because our next objective is to prevent trafficking from happening. Our network's main office is situated at the Kvinnoforum in Sweden. All the NGOs send their information and network with other organisations through this Kvinnoforum.

As a result of the network's development, we have another project called 'Lighthouse shelter for victims of trafficking'. It is the first shelter in Latvia and in Riga. There, women can get help from professional workers and use the services offered. They can get information about human rights and take advantage of the educational service, which organises lectures on health and gender issues. There is also a social service, medical service, psychological service and, very important, a short-term housing service for these women when they need a place to stay for a short period.

Finally, I would like to just say that thanks to the project and our network, we were able to locate two women in Spain last month. One we have already succeeded in bringing back and she is now staying at our shelter, whereas the other one is still in Spain and cannot return to Latvia. Thank you for your attention.

More

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Unge På Flugt – Young Refugee

Presented by Michael SCHOLLERT -

My name is Michael, and I am from the Danish Red Cross Youth. I am here to present the *Unge På Flugt* project, which in Danish means "young refugee". In 1996, I met someone from the project for the first time. It actually swept me off my feet. I thought this is the project I have to participate in. Since then, I have become an instructor, on-site co-ordinator and project co-ordinator. I have helped the



Michael Schollert, presenting the Danish Red Cross Youth's Unge På Flugt project for young refugees

Norwegian Red Cross and Icelandic Red Cross to establish the project in their countries as well. I'm going to tell you a bit about the project, naturally. I'm going to tell you what it is, who is involved, how we do it. I will tell you about the influence it has on the instructors, the participants and society as a whole. As I told you before, I'm from the Red Cross Youth, which is part of the national Red Cross. As such we must work according to the so-called seven principles¹, which is a kind of guarantee of quality. These working rules mean, of course, that we cannot resort to physical violence or mental or psychological terror. So these are good guidelines to have and to remember when we are out in the field.

So what is the Red Cross Youth? Well, you could compare it to an active theatre with live educational role-playing. Many people think role-playing is young people sitting around a table and playing a board game with dice. But here we are talking about real live role-playing. We're active with the things we have at hand. We're changing locations and using African costumes. Why are we doing live role-playing? Well, we are trying to convey emotions to the people participating in the project. If you try just for a moment to imagine how you would go about teaching other people to feel what other people feel, you

¹ Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity, Universality

will probably soon realise that it is very difficult and almost impossible to do. I cannot stand here and tell you how it feels to be on the run, to feel hungry, to feel cold, or to feel tracked, because after all we know that we can just go home, open the fridge, get something to eat, then climb into bed. But by doing live role-playing, we are actually making the participants feel the way a refugee might feel. I said *might* feel, because we can't say that every refugee feels the same way. This is just how they might feel, some of the emotions they might have. By doing this, we are actually getting people to think about what's going on around them. It's sort of a wake-up call where they reflect on their own experiences. It's not just something they read about or see on television. The next time they hear on the news about people on the run, they suddenly say "Oh, ok I remember what it was like to try and cross the border, I remember what it was like to have my personal belongings taken away from me". These are some of the techniques we use, and I'll say some more about them later. By having people think about these emotions and discover what's happening with other people around them, we're actually raising their awareness and helping them understand what's going on.

About the people involved in the project, we are a co-ordination group responsible for most of the administration, organising events and deciding, for example, when we are going to have a play. When we are on the ground, we have instructors. The role-playing lasts for a weekend, but the participants are directly involved for 24 hours. The instructors are there for the weekend and then it takes about two days to recover. We don't get much sleep, and we work really hard. Around Wednesday, we get back and it's okay you get back to normal. The instructors come to the school, and the participants are mostly pupils there. The teachers help with the planning, know the area, find the locations, make up the routes we requested and work behind the scenes. When we start the game, the teachers are not allowed to interact with the pupils. We are the only ones there. So they work behind the scenes, helping make food, transporting objects and improvising as drivers for the participants and for the instructors from different locations. The instructors are between 18 and 30 years old and are all volunteers. They may be students, craftsmen or academics. We have all sorts of professional backgrounds represented among the instructors, which means that all we share in common is that we are volunteers and really want to do the project. We have our own courses where we train the instructors ourselves. We provide them with a few notions of psychology and give them some teaching tools they can use for the game with the participants.

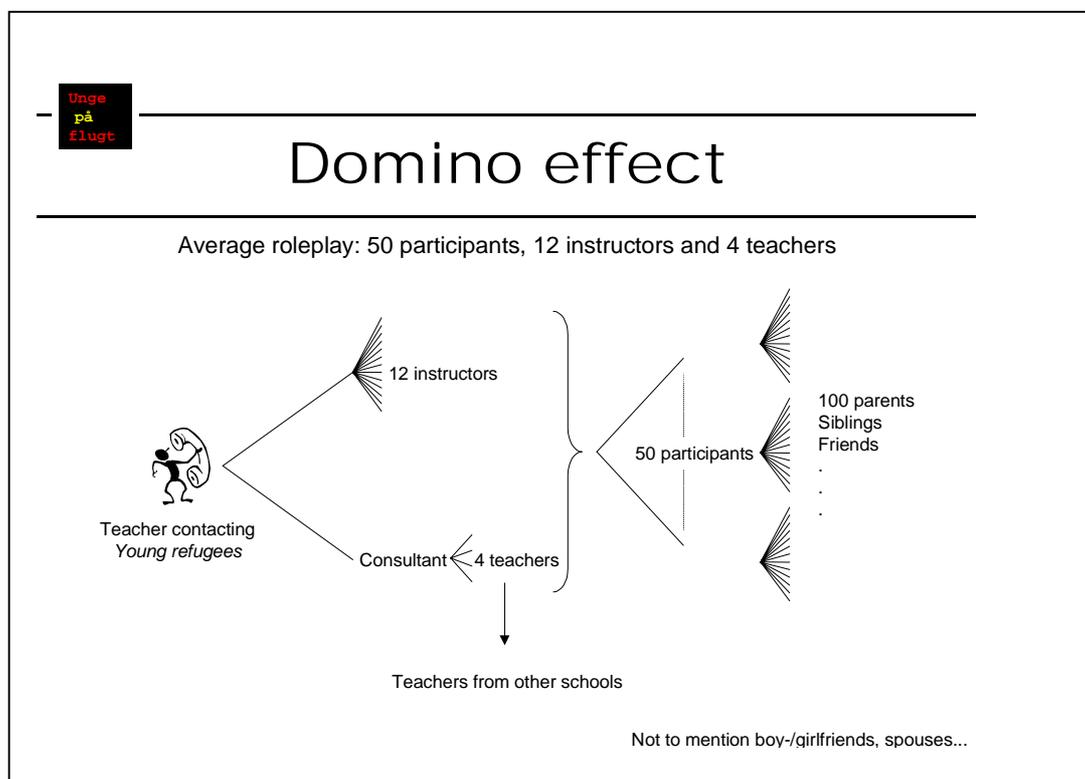
The participants are pupils from different schools and are between 13 and 16 years old. It's a really good age to work with, because they are quick to give us feedback about what we're doing, and we know from what the schools tell us that they actually think about the issues we raise. They take an active part in the dialogues we have afterwards. As I said, we do it on the weekend and we have set up a schedule where between 1 o'clock Saturday and 1 o'clock Sunday we have to accomplish a lot. During this period we have to cover 14 small sequences, lasting anywhere from 30 minutes to several hours. There is, for example, an office sequence where you have to run around and try to get some documents to get out of the country. We have a refugee camp, a border checkpoint, a customs office, an interrogation scenario, a situation where people are arrested when they get to a certain country. The concept says in this case that you as a refugee have to get out of Somalia, cross Europe and then reach Denmark where you have to try to obtain asylum. That may sound easy, but what matters most is what happens between Somalia and Denmark .

To make sure that everybody knows what's going on, and that the participants are provided with the necessary background, we provide them with new identities. They get a new name, a different age, a specific background and receive some game money so that they can actually act in small groups where

they have to help each other to get through their ordeal. The role-playing can be instructor versus instructor, or I play against and with other instructors in the sequences to make sure that it's as realistic as possible. I might sit in an office with another person – another instructor – and we have to interact so that the participants can see how the role-playing game works. Instructors act against and with the participants. We're always with the participants who are never alone. We always have to be there, but always in specific roles, and the participants are active with and against the other participants.

In our game we have a clan system where some families are from one clan and other families are from another clan. These two clans do not like each other, which means we have potential conflicts that we have to try and prevent. As I said, they get new identities because we don't want them to take anything personally. We don't want to affect our participants negatively. Of course, it can happen that during the game somebody feels we are nonetheless getting too personal and therefore they have the possibility of pulling an emergency brake. If they do that, we take them out of the game and talk to them, asking how they felt, why they did it and telling them it's okay to pull the emergency brake.

At 1 o'clock on Saturday, they get some background information. We tell them about Somalia, the family structure, the culture, the political history and we put them in these small families. We give them their cases, wait for them to fill out their forms, their passports and then the game starts. The next 20 hours are active role-playing, and it is non-stop. There are no breaks at any point. We have a refugee camp, which is the first place they get to where they can actually sit down, relax and think about what's going on. That's often the place where you see people pull the emergency brake if they want to get out, because that's where they suddenly feel "Oh man this is not nice, I don't like being on the run. It's no fun having people take stuff from me at the customs office. These are my things, I don't want you to take them". We take the food, we take their coca-cola, crisps, chocolates – they have so much



chocolate, you wouldn't believe it. Actually, once the participants find out we are going to take their stuff away, they try to hide it, everywhere. Once we had a girl who discovered we were going to take her chocolate; she had a chocolate bar and said "Okay, I'm going to hide this from them". She hid it in her bra and kept it there for 20 hours. Just imagine what it looked like when she took it out. It's quite funny to see how people react to what we are doing. They actually begin to steal from each other, stealing from the officers just to get the papers they know are important.

After that, we stop the game and say that this was the practical part. We then move on to the emotions and the evaluation, which is the most important part. This is where we actually talk about what's been going on, how they are feeling, and their experiences during the role-play, discussing their emotions and role attitudes. We ask questions like, 'Why did you act like that towards this person? You know you have to get something from him, you know he is the only one who can help you, why did you act like that?' That's very interesting because that's where the reflection starts. And then the last two hours of the evaluation, that's where you go over the role playing game from beginning to end, sequence by sequence and say how do you think this relates to the real world? Do you think this was realistic, do you think people would do things like that, do you think the situations are true? Sometimes people say, "No, this can't be". But actually what we are doing is extremely close to reality, and people get shocked when we tell them what's going on in the real world.

Sometimes people ask us, "Do you really think you're making a difference? This is just a game, this is just role-playing." But we know we are. Our instructors are being educated. They acquire teaching aids and psychological tools and gain experience in handling conflicts between the participants. They learn to understand other people. It's interesting to see how close you can get to people when you do this. As far as the participants are concerned, they gain awareness and a better understanding of what's going on from the reflection on their emotions. They may in the end become more tolerant, with their new understanding of other people and society, and their raised awareness is food for qualified discussions.

But our work has a domino effect and we reach many more people than just those who take part in the weekend event. In a typical game, the people who are normally helping us are 12 instructors and 4 consultant teachers. These 16 people are trying to make the game for the 50 participants, meaning a total of about 66 persons are involved. However, our 50 participants ideally have two parents each, meaning we are now talking about 150-160 people. They have siblings, friends, not to mention boyfriends, girlfriends and the spouses of the teachers. That's a lot of people just for one game on a weekend. From the feedback we get from the schools and the teachers, we know we are truly making a difference. And that's why it's so important to continue.

Thank you very much.

More

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Mostar Intercultural Festival Presented by Caroline Audric

My name is Caroline Audric, and I will be talking to you about the project I have been involved in since 1997, and in particular the work I have been doing as a volunteer in Mostar since November. I will begin with a brief description of the organisation and place where I am working to help you understand the impact of such a project and our collective action in Bosnia. I will tell you about my role in the organisation committee and then share with you my views on voluntary service and how I see this activity.

Drugi Most, the association that sent me, was set up in 1996 following the division of Bosnia Herzegovina into two entities. Drugi Most means 'The other bridge' in Serbo-Croat. We have 50 active members, three full-time staff and me as a volunteer. And we are one of the two organisations that launched the project in Bosnia. It all began back in 1996 when an artist gave us the idea of having a festival in this divided and symbolic city where so much violence had occurred. Until the 1998 edition of the festival, there had only been the two French associations. They had been developing their credibility on the ground, trying to establish contacts in order to bring together various local organisations for future action.



Caroline Audric, at the Convention

Bosnia Herzegovina, where I work, is a Republic and part of the former Yugoslav Federation. Before the war, which broke out in 1991 and ended in 1995, there were three ethnic communities (the Bosnian Croats, the Bosnian Serbs, and the Bosnian Muslims) and three religious cultures (Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim). There was no aggression between these communities, rather a general climate of mutual tolerance. At the time, the differences were an asset for Bosnia Herzegovina. Unfortunately, an upsurge of nationalism emerged in 1987, leading to war and ending in genocide. The conflict that arose between the ethnic groups resulted in the displacement of 2 million people, only a third of whom have gone back to their original homes. The country has been devastated, and the inhabitants have lost

everything. It's a rather sombre picture but a realistic one. In 1995, the Dayton Peace Accords silenced the guns but the conflict continued in other ways. In the end, the solution found was to split Bosnia Herzegovina in two, with a Croat Muslim entity and a Serb entity.

For Mostar, this meant a division between the Bosnian Croat and the Muslim communities. There is a demarcation line, which is devastating. On one side lives the Croat population and on the other side the Muslim population, and there is really very little contact between the two. For the young people who live there the situation is dramatic in every respect: economically, socially, ecologically. The country really is in a difficult state and the young people say they don't have any future, there is no alternative, they would like to leave the country because it's not fit for anyone. But on the positive side, there are local people who still believe in Mostar. They have hope left and are trying to work together. It is with these people that we set up a project. Most of the people living there really want to see society evolve, so we have been developing a framework within which we can work with them. This enables us to organise regular events where we can have exchanges and meetings, share common experience and also take pleasure in being together.

Today, the festival is put on by an organisation committee set up by two French NGOs, one Spanish NGO and seven NGOs based in Bosnia Herzegovina. They have their own activities during the year and actually take part in the festival's preparation, sustaining it into the future. Officially called the Mostar Intercultural Festival Organising Committee, MIFCO is a federation doing what its name says it does. Its objectives are to share expertise, pool tools, exchange experiences, lend mutual support for one another's projects and help certain organisations that have particular needs. Another important aspect of the federation is that it works on a European scale; it tries to build bridges and solidarity between countries that are not necessarily far apart geographically. I think it is necessary to establish links between these two parts of Europe. Finally, the fact that this common action is rooted in the cultural sector is important, because for us culture means exchange, free expression and also fraternity between people.

So this intercultural festival is really the fruit of people who have been working since the end of the war in the neighbourhoods of Mostar, and they have an idea of the future, which is radically different from the present. We decided to call the festival 'intercultural' because it is an event for meetings, exchanges and sharing between the peoples, and also because its aim is to promote the diverse forms of creativity and artistic expression. I will read to you a few of the objectives stated in the charter of the Intercultural Festival: "To encourage cultural expression, artistic expression, promoting diversity, discovery and tolerance; supporting the creation and development of cultural and artistic activities in difficult environments, notably in Mostar and in Herzegovina; offer an opportunity for all people of Bosnia Herzegovina to express themselves culturally in as much as it represents diversity and richness of the country and not something that serves hatred and segregation;". There are two democratic objectives I would like to stress. First of all, the festival is fully opposed to nationalistic ideologies, community discrimination and political systems based on a sort of mafia system. Second of all, it aims to help reunify Mostar and the Republic as a whole in order to guarantee the rights of minorities, human rights and some viable economic development and an opening to international exchange, with a view to membership in the European Union.

To give you a slightly less abstract view, perhaps I could explain to you what happens during the festival. The event lasts ten days and covers seven sectors of activities. The first one is theatre, which includes street theatre, plays and improvisation, and all that takes place in Mostar and in neighbouring villages. We've got cinema and video and open-air cinemas. We work with places such as orphanages

and certain game centres. There are also specific workshops for children or adults, the aim being that during the ten-day festival people create something themselves, such as costumes or whatever, and present their work at the final event. We put on music concerts and organise exhibitions of sculptures, paintings, photos, artistic creations made from recycled materials and graffiti on prison walls. We also develop events that help brighten up the town with colours. Another sector we cover is civil society. This is one of the areas we want to promote this year, particularly with information stands that allow us to show during the festival the kind of initiatives being undertaken and what's happening in Mostar. For example, there would be an association that supports women's rights and fights violence in families, showing that support does truly exist. There is also something called 'activism', which takes the form of billboards, posters and stickers. We try to get across the message "Move", we're here, we can do something in this city, despite the situation. We also organise round table meetings where certain issues and problems can be raised and information exchanged with neighbouring villages and countries such as Serbia and Croatia. What is more, spontaneous actions began occurring two years ago, e.g. such as the clean-up of places where young people play, because Mostar is a beautiful city but it's very dirty. We thought this was a good idea and have joined in the clean-up movement, which is appreciated by the town's inhabitants.

An important impact of the ten-day festival and year-round presence of the organising committee is the impetus and change in atmosphere it has brought to the town. The atmosphere tends to be tense. There is very little mobility, people don't feel safe, and so they don't like moving around the town very much. So the fact that we've got international artists here means people move around more and feel more secure. This gives them a chance to re-appropriate their own space. There are people with lots of different views and different styles, and they may be eccentric, outside the established norm.

As far as our teamwork goes, we establish links between young people in Mostar because we work with people and organisations from all parts of Mostar. We give them an opportunity to discuss and even argue issues that interest them. I think it is important too for them to be able to look to the future and try and imagine things a few months later or even a few years on in time.

We are very keen on working over a long-term period, so we sometimes worry about the financial part. But we really would like to start something that lasts the whole year, given the contacts and experience we have in Europe. All the artists have succeeded in having workshops that continue, and we would like to have a place where people can meet with one another, engage in dialogue and establish projects.

Now, I would like to share with you how I've experienced my voluntary service and what being a volunteer has meant to me. For me, voluntary service is tackling problems, understanding them and taking action. It's sharing one's time, challenging prejudices and questioning one's sense of security. I tried to question my stereotypes, understand people's different lives, listen to them and spend time working on particular issues. There is also the philanthropic aspect, which I think is important and which is not charity but the respect of values and notions of equality. From a technical point of view, volunteering is being able to analyse the situation, giving feedback to my own country and trying to work together to set up a coherent and sustainable project. Thank you.

Round Table Discussion 1: "Volunteering – what's in it for Society?"

Chair: Diana Perez Buck- UNV

- Ms Carmen Rodriguez Eyre, European Network on Youth Volunteering research project, very active in the area of non-formal education, especially in rural areas and devitalised areas.
- Ms Dr. Hanna Beate Schöpp-Schilling, Robert Bosch Foundation, German representative at the UN Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women (one of the independent treaty bodies that monitor the implementation of Human Rights treaties), Chief representative to the board of the AFS international programmes
- Ms Simona Costanzo Sow, Co-ordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS)
- Michael Schollert of Unge Pa Flugt and Caroline Audric of DRUGI MOST

Simona Costanzo:

I agree with what was just said about the four presentations and how impressive they were. I think they gave us a pretty good idea of what society can gain through volunteering and voluntary service. I was especially impressed by the part on how to translate abstract political ideas into concrete local action, in all of the cases. Achieving it through empathy instead of through some form of education or top-down approach is indeed an important element. There is the example of how refugees experience trying to get to another country. All that direct involvement is, I think, quite a novel approach to getting a theme across. This is what voluntary service can do. It gives concrete form to ideas in a variety of ways, unlike anything people could learn in schools or through formal education. So, I'd quite like to repeat the play element, emotions, empathy, and concrete action.

But there is an aspect that comes to mind, and I think Diana mentioned this earlier. We are, of course, convinced that voluntary service is positive, but we also have to be careful not to just celebrate the positive aspects of what we're doing. I think it could be interesting also to explore some of the dangers. The project in Mostar, in particular, made me think of this. How can you make sure that an idea is not imposed from the outside, that the needs of the local people have been determined, that it is really what the people living there want, that they are involved in the project at all times? I think that projects dealing with people after a conflict or where people have been very divided are particularly difficult to set up from the outside. External people cannot easily come in and say you should get along well with each other, you should do this or that together. Involving the locals and making sure that what is done is really their initiative is quite a sensitive process. And even if the first impulse comes from the outside, I think both this project and a number of the others are good examples of how in a second phase local initiatives can be taken into account and the project built up together. I think this also has a number of implications regarding the way in which participants need to be prepared for this kind of project. This might be a more appropriate theme for the second round table, but I thought it important to mention this aspect.

Diana Perez-Buck:

Thank you so much Simona for those remarks. I will now hand the floor over to Hanna.

Hanna Beate Schöpp-Schilling:

I just have a short contribution to make. What came to mind is that all four projects had one thing in common – they identified societal problems and made them visible and then developed actions to deal with them. In this sense, I think that these projects and the volunteers working on them are serving a very specific function. We all know that if a human being does not want to recognise a psychological problem, or an illness even, that human being will poison him or herself. I think we can take this example and project it onto society. If society does not want to recognise problems and to deal with problems, society will poison itself. And I think what we are seeing, what is happening through these projects is a healing process. As the previous speaker said, it is a healing process that comes from the bottom of society and therefore has a certain vividness and strong commitment and enriches society.

What I think is very important – and this is answering the question that was raised before – is yes there are these little projects all over the world with their healing and enriching function, but how can we ensure sustainability? I think here at one point the existing social structures like politics, parliaments, existing strong organisations have to come along and take on board these solutions that are being offered, so that the healing process goes beyond the grassroots level and reaches the other segments of society. But at the same time, while this process is going on, new problems and 'illnesses' will arise. It will be the contribution of another group of volunteers to identify this, make it visible and do something about it. Thus I think in young volunteers we can see the dynamics of the renewal of society.

Carmen Rodriguez Eyre:

There are a number of things that I noticed. First of all, I've been trying to set up a European network for youth volunteering and one of the first problems has been the fact that different countries have different approaches when it comes to training and the social recognition of voluntary service. This morning we mentioned the Commission's White Paper. I think this is a necessary step. But I don't think it is a solution in itself. Instead, it must be seen as a starting point for further work. In my country, Spain, volunteering is managed by a number of central, regional and local government agencies. A large number of young people are involved in volunteering. But despite all the efforts made, it's difficult to come up with a harmonized structure, even within our own country. When we meet people from France, the Netherlands, or



Panel Discussion 1: "Volunteering – What's in it for society?": Caroline Audric, Michael Schollert, Hanna Beate Schöpp-Schilling, Carmen Rodriguez Eyre, Simona Costanzo (from left to right).

Germany, they often tell us they have the same problem.

In the presentations we heard by the volunteers, there were two things that I liked. First, I was impressed by the extent to which these young people are involved in what are very different projects. Second, I was impressed by the fact that they see the volunteer as playing an important role. I think it's extremely important for volunteers to be aware that volunteering isn't simply a service provided to society, to others, but that volunteering is also an opportunity for personal development.

Obviously volunteers don't become volunteers for selfish reasons, but there is certainly something in it for them. Someone who volunteers learns new skills. You have to be trained by psychologists, for instance, as was the case with the Red Cross project. To some extent this is already taking place. But we really should start to give serious thought to the idea of self-education through volunteering, because this would be an excellent opportunity to develop volunteering. Volunteering is not just a solution to problems like finding an alternative activity for conscientious objectors or giving people something to do to get them off the street. Volunteering is an excellent opportunity to do a "master's in life".

Personally for me this is an important reason for volunteering. I think I'm doing something, which offers a service and I think I'm helping change the world in my own way. But I also enjoy new experiences, new challenges which force me to think about my own beliefs. So really this is an experience for your entire life. Volunteers have to rationalise the processes, transform them and apply them to their own life. It's an excellent opportunity to change individuals and society. I think this is what we are starting to discuss in various fora and will also be doing later on in this conference.

It is important that we see volunteers as real participants in society and that we try to find common ways to change life and society through volunteering. Another aspect dealt with in the presentation this morning was how volunteering helps change society. I mean it is a driving force behind societal change. It can change values. It can change the constitution of our societies, which traditionally see intelligence as the most determining factor; but in voluntary organisations we see that the leaders are not necessarily the intellectually, academically trained ones. This is true in life too: those with the most diplomas are not necessarily the most successful. Volunteering shows that there are many more qualities and skills that need to be developed to make a good leader.

Also important is the fact that volunteering is not paid, contrasting the whole notion of materialism and focusing on the sustainability of our efforts. I think it's an economic force that is in the process of transforming the Western world. In a number of Western countries the most creative jobs are emerging in the non-profit sector. So I really do think we're totally changing the way people see society and how society sees things. I think this is largely because of the free services provided through voluntary service organisations. Volunteers are the protagonists behind these actions.

Diana Perez-Buck:

Having heard these stimulating comments, I open the floor to any further questions or remarks you may have regarding these presentations.

Roel Forceville:

I'm working on a joint project between the European Youth Forum and the Belgian Youth Councils for the forthcoming European presidency. As some of you may know, the Belgian Presidency is preparing a resolution on volunteering. When we were preparing the draft paper for this resolution with the Belgian Youth Councils and the administration, we went over various issues one of which I haven't heard raised here yet. We have seen the diversity of volunteering and what's in it for society, but I haven't really heard anything said about the limits of voluntary service or volunteering. I mean we haven't heard where the different people around the table here draw the line between volunteering and paid work. It's a question that came up when we were discussing this resolution, because those who are working on the question of a legal status for volunteering know that this is one of the big key issues. Policy makers tend to be a bit tricky on the competition between volunteering and paid work. So I would just like to know from the different people here how they see this and where they set the limits between the two.

John Annette:

I think in Europe and certainly in the UK there is also a question of the changing partnership between the public sector (the state) and the third sector or the voluntary sector, and for that matter also its relationship with the business sector. I think that the question raised is very important because one of the key problems for the voluntary sector is funding and sustainability. If you really want to have an impact on local communities, on the people in need in our society, we have to be able to have sustainability for these projects. I think this is a very important challenge. So the issue to what extent the voluntary sector, while remaining voluntary, also does get support from the state and hopefully also increasingly the business sector to carry out these activities is a key question.

Tadej Reisner:

The same question came up in our youth group. The volunteers put a lot of time and energy into voluntary work and the benefits are mostly of an emotional nature. So when we were faced with the option of getting paid for this work, we actually refused it, because it would dramatically change the concept of our group. I think volunteering is working 'from the goodness of one's heart' whereas a paid job is when one has to make a living.

Caroline Audric:

I would like to say a word about money. I personally started the project and I think we all agree that we are not doing this for money but for the aim of the action.

Hanna Beate Schöpp-Schilling:

This is a very important question, and, of course, it has something to do with the situation in our societies. I think this question tends to come up when there is unemployment and there are not enough jobs to go around. If we had an ideal society where men and women alike could have a job they wanted and needed and where young and old alike could volunteer and be an integrated part of society, then the problem would not arise. The problem currently is that neither the business world nor the State want to provide enough money or enough jobs for the work that is actually there to be done, and we do have these millions of unemployed people. I think this is where the problem comes from and why there is competition. The solution in the long run must be that we give a livelihood to men and women either through work or through transfer payments; only on that basis can you do volunteer work – you can't do voluntary work when you're starving or when you have to feed your family. I don't have a solution I can only point to some visions we have to strive for.

Carmen Rodriguez Eyre:

I don't think there is any easy solution to this problem between volunteer work and paid work. But I have an idea that might help us find the best solution. I think that when we talk about volunteering, all too often we talk about volunteers as people engaged in a social action for society. They are doing it because they want to and so are doing it for free. But we need to start thinking about volunteers as people who are doing something they really want to do and who see their action as a great opportunity, as a preparation. And if we were to focus more on what a volunteer receives in terms of training for life, then I think we would better understand that the volunteer is not taking paid work away from anybody.

I find it unfair to identify a social problem and then expect volunteers to solve it when those who have the money, power and training cannot solve it. Volunteers don't solve problems. They may bring problems to the fore or introduce a new dynamic. Their work is extremely important, and they provide support and act as catalysts of the best social energies. They are also a stimulus to professionals who perhaps will start working in a direction they wouldn't have considered previously. In this way, a volunteer is also in the process of learning. It's like in business where people who are learning are actually the force behind their own training. Thinking in those terms when thinking about volunteerism might lead to solutions. In the past we have always considered volunteers a kind of support service, people doing what others don't want to do, from an administrative viewpoint. But it's the volunteers themselves today who have to start thinking about what volunteerism has to offer, also in terms of helping them find a job. When we do that, we will realise that we are not taking jobs away from people and professionals. Rather, we are creating work. I think volunteerism needs to be regulated as something intermediary and it should not be undeclared work or cheap labour. I am not offering a solution, but I believe it is along these lines that we should think. Maybe you find this a bit disappointing.

Ulvi Salayev (UNV Azerbaijan):

I would just like to draw something to your attention. In our language, volunteer means a person with a kind heart. As I am responsible for recruiting volunteers in our movement, I would like to say that there are 2000 applications from young people in Azerbaijan who want to volunteer and they don't care about money. They just want to build a basis for the future of Azerbaijan and really do care. Our movement has local development among its priorities. We really want to do our best at the professional level in order to lay the foundations for a better world.

Diana Perez-Buck:

Do they see volunteering as a way of developing skills that could be useful in the future professionally?

Ulvi Salayev (UNV Azerbaijan):

No. The idea of volunteering really fits in with the mentality of the Azeri people. We just want to create a bright future for our youth. Maybe there are some who see this differently. But the majority wants to volunteer for future development.

Helmut Warmenhoven (Youth Action for Peace):

I am working for an international platform for international voluntary service. I would like to comment on the job replacement issue. I don't agree with what was said, because in my opinion it is possible that volunteers take jobs away from paid people. So, for us as a voluntary service organisation, we have to ask what is the added value of a volunteer here, and are you sure this person is not just doing a job as a secretary who we should actually pay? On the other hand, I wonder if the objective of voluntary service is to find a better job afterwards – I don't think so.

I think that there are other values that were mentioned as well. These are values that volunteers or people want to learn. In this sense I would like to say that in my opinion there is one thing we forget. Volunteers are in a sense really irritating [laughs]. If you look for example at The Bet: They can say, I will bet you politicians that we are going to do this, and if you don't want to do that by yourself we are going to do it. And that's really irritating for politicians. The same thing is true if you have an international volunteer in a certain country, in a certain local village, people are looking around and wonder what's happening, why? And in this sense also it's very irritating and very stimulating for a local community.

Alexander Hanel (FAR youth club):

I'm a German volunteer who has been working for the past year in Bulgaria in a youth club. But the people who are active in that youth club are also volunteers. I just want to add a couple of remarks about the limits of voluntary work. We always have the problem of people wanting to do something voluntary but not being able to afford doing so. They have to take paid work to feed themselves, and can't take time to work voluntarily at the same time. This is really an obstacle and something we have to think about. We find ourselves with a situation where people who volunteer come from affluent backgrounds whereas people without an independent means of income who want to volunteer are unable to.

On the issue of volunteers taking paid work away from others, society must learn to value voluntary work. A problem in Bulgaria is that families and schools tell young Bulgarians that

going to a youth club is a waste of time, because they don't learn or study anything during that time and therefore don't get a good job afterwards. The young people also have to have private tutoring to get good marks, so when they participate in our activities they can't attend the private lessons. So don't only think in the Western way that doing voluntary work means having the time and financial means. In Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe, it's sometimes not possible for other reasons.

Laura Gil - European Youth Forum:

What you were saying a moment ago about the limits between voluntary and paid work, well obviously we're doing this on a voluntary basis, we're not being paid, we want to make our own contribution, not receive something. That's the idea behind volunteer work. On the other hand, I think that those who contribute a lot of time can also expect to be paid. If for instance as a volunteer you have a family, a job or other obligations, well obviously you don't have the time to spend 8 or 9 hours a day working on a voluntary project. So it is necessary that within such an organisation we also have paid workers employed full time to do this work.

Simona Costanzo:

I obviously also don't have the answer to Roel's question about the limits between employment and voluntary service, and in fact there is a grey area. When we ask organisations how they identify projects and what criteria they use to place a volunteer in a project, they often say that a volunteer must not replace a paid worker or must do something that otherwise would not be done. Obviously this is not a very sound basis for a definition.

But I do think that one element that emerged was that voluntary work is based on a personal initiative. In a number of the examples we heard about projects, it was clear that you create your project in a way that it is *not* predefined, and no salary is foreseen for the person to carry out tasks defined by the employer beforehand. A lot is left up to the volunteer. The volunteer is assigned to a project, but the project has to grow with the volunteer. And that fits in somewhat with what Helmut said in terms of volunteers being irritating. You have to take much greater account of the energy they put into the project, the way they want the project to develop. It's to a much greater degree based on their person or on their initiative as a group. I think this is a very important element related to the idea of active citizenship – being able to take initiative, to work towards fulfilment of a need that has been identified. This question of active citizenship ties in with what was said at the beginning of this round: How can we make a project sustainable? How can we make sure that there is something that stays once the initial project is finished? I think that not only the people involved in the project but also the people around it must see that it's possible to do something, to develop an initiative. You don't have to wait for an authority or whoever to offer the appropriate framework before you can start to develop an initiative.

Obviously this has to be a mutual process, in that the volunteers or organisations are not the only ones giving concrete expression to political ideas. As Mrs Schöpp-Schilling said earlier, the institutions have to be involved too. Volunteers take up issues in society. They identify issues that need to be tackled, and there has to be a two-way dialogue to make sure that not only the volunteers translate theory into action but the decision-makers listen to them and take into account their solutions. I guess this will be one of the objectives of the third round table discussion to see how this kind of partnership can be established and made workable.

Sarah Greaves (Prince's Trust):

I wanted to speak from a personal experience of volunteering in Britain and the difficulties that I had there when I finished my education and actually getting in to voluntary work and being quite restricted already by the government in what I was actually entitled to do. The amount of time I was able to put in to my voluntary work which was for me incredibly important to get involved and to get experience of different organisations. But there were many limits from the state, and I wasn't able to exceed so many hours of voluntary work and in a way it was incredibly devalued as a thing for young people to be engaging in. For me personally I had to lie basically and say "No I am actively seeking paid employment and no I'm not doing voluntary work, I'm sitting home writing application forms and falling into a great depression".

Michael Schollert:

My personal experience is that the major reward of being a volunteer is actually the personal development – the major concern is the funding of the projects. Because it's an ongoing struggle to try and find the funds to do what we are actually doing and what we are actually best at. If we had a solid basis of funding we could make further development of the project, offer better courses to our volunteers. And by doing that we actually unlock potential, unlock interest and resources people did not know they had. We have seen people changing careers after having joined voluntary work. As a final conclusion, I would say that it would add to better projects, more employment, with better skilled people.

Carmen Rodriguez- Eyre:

I would just like to mention two things that come to mind. All of us need time for our families, for work and for school, but we also have leisure time that we use as we see fit. Some people only do rather selfish things for their own personal merit while others try to devote their free time to volunteer work. As Laura said, I think it's important to bear in mind that any programme, any project needs a core of people who give continuity. But unlike in a company the decision-makers are volunteers and the people taking action are volunteers. The paid people are dealing with the technical work, serving the ideals of volunteerism and at the service of the effectiveness of making it effective. So I think in social and economic terms the situation is different. This has to be taken into account otherwise we'll get the wrong picture.

Diana Perez-Buck:

I would like to thank Heini, Natalija, Caroline and Michael for their wonderful presentations. I would also like to thank the panel members for their contributions and everyone for the stimulating discussion. See you this afternoon.

B. Volunteering – "What's in it for the volunteers?"

Moderation and Opening Statement: Anne Marie Sigmund, President of Group 3 of the Economic and Social Committee

The activities that you're describing here today take place within the framework of civil society. The Economic and Social Committee is the representative body of civil society and one of our main concerns is to look at how to promote involvement in civil society. So I'm very pleased to be here with you today. I think that what's lacking is the link between our theoretical analysis and the practical side on the ground, which I think is your job. You really confirm what we write. We've said that civil society activities are marked by responsibility, solidarity, voluntary work – exactly what you are doing. I have thought about what I could say voluntary service brings to the volunteer, what the added value for volunteers is. I don't think we need to talk about the added value in human terms, and I don't need to talk about your contribution to the development of our society.



The second round of presentations and discussions: "Volunteering – What's in it for the volunteers",

From my experience I can say that the main advantage for young people is that through volunteering they are very quickly brought into a situation where they assume responsibility, where they really have to do something from beginning to end. This is a challenge people do not face to the same extent in professional life because of hierarchies. I think it's a major challenge for one's personal development. We all benefit from this when people become increasingly able to take on tasks in civil society.

Perhaps one point we could discuss later is in voluntary work you "learn by doing". You learn through your voluntary service. We may need to think about how we can document this and how we should value voluntary work. In Germany, for example, the civilian service isn't of very high value. It's considered a minor thing and I think that is wrong. We need to give more recognition to voluntary work and raise its social prestige. I would like to see this discussed and hope that we as the ESC can take into account what you are bringing to this conference today.

World Youth Millennium Awards

Presented by Sarah Greaves

My name is Sarah Greaves, and I am from the UK. I'm very proud to be here today and to be able to share my experiences of the World Youth Millennium Award Project. This programme is a partnership between Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and the Prince's Trust. It's funded by the Millennium Commission. It's open to volunteers from the age of 17 to 25 and it's an exchange involving an equal partnership between young people in the UK and young people in developing countries. I was one of 18 young people, 9 of whom were from Britain and 9 from Sri Lanka. We were representing different geographical, economic, social backgrounds to reflect the diversity within both countries.

We lived and worked in pairs, and as a partnership we also worked within the team, as the team lived and worked together in both communities, although we specifically lived and worked in pairs. So I had a partner whose name is Kalyani. We lived with host families in both of our communities and we had our local community project we were working in. For three months we worked in Britain and for three months we worked in Sri Lanka. A tree [shown on overhead] provides a good analogy of the programme.

The roots represent the binding force of all the volunteers, the trunk represents the general structure of the programme with the host communities, the work placements, the host families, the counterpart pairs, the educational activity days arranged by the partners. The branches of the tree represent the programme objectives stated by the World Youth Millennium Awards. They are: to engage in community work with a benefit for both communities, to learn about the diversity of ourselves and of the people with whom we are working to enhance cross-cultural understanding, to develop skills (personal skills, career oriented skills), to try and enhance people's employability through the programme, and for us to develop a good understanding of the communities and the culture that we are in. The leaves represent the individual's personal aims. For me throughout the programme I have spent quite a bit of time thinking about these before engaging in the programme. I wanted to be able to contribute to both communities and to engage in both communities. I wanted to be able to develop my own personal leadership skills. I had a particular interest in community arts, cross-cultural arts, and so I wanted to get quite a lot of inspiration. I wanted to learn on a whole about community and international development.

What did we do? For the first three months we worked in Ulverston, which is a small town in the North-West of England. Kalyani and I worked in a placement with young people. We were working in a secondary school and we were also working in a youth club which was attached to the school. Within the school we developed participatory workshops, introducing a lot of the young people through their humanities curriculum to the different culture and aspects of Sri Lanka. Also, we were contributing to a lot of their topics revolving around citizenship, looking at the rights of young people, looking at issues such as what and who constitutes a community. We were able to offer our very different perspectives on that and through doing so we enhanced a sense of global. Within the youth club setting, the young people were getting involved in their local communities. We facilitated recreational projects with them and with the adults with learning disabilities who were also from the local community. Our aim was to try and bring these two groups together because they hadn't really much contact with each other. An open evaluation of the whole programme showed that the young people really felt uncomfortable at first and we're quite honest and open in admitting that, but after a few weeks they began to feel much



Sarah Greaves, presenting World Youth Millennium Awards, a project of VSO and the Prince's Trust.

more comfortable on both sides. Through all the activities that we had arranged for them they actually started to develop genuine friendships.

The project was brilliant. It really empowered the local young people within the youth club and enabled them to make a very positive contribution to their community. Also they gained a lot of motivation to continue with their voluntary work. I realise that this might be a bit confusing, because I was a young person working again within another organisation working with young people. But anyway all young people benefited from the project.

The relationship between Kalyani and I was quite an intense one. We were living and working together for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for six months. Initially there were quite a lot of language difficulties. My knowledge of Sinhala was very small indeed and her knowledge of English was quite limited in the initial stages so we had quite a few hurdles to overcome. Through a lot of non-verbal communication we managed to build up a very strong relationship in the initial stages until we developed fluency in both people's languages. But there were many ambiguities based on cultural mannerisms as well, such as the Sri Lankan headshake, which initially created some frustration because of ignorance. In Sri Lanka it could mean yes, it could mean no, it could be maybe, it could be I'm not listening to you, I don't want to listen to you, it could mean anything.... It took me a while to understand this but once I did I was able to use it appropriately in the right context.

So, I think the beauty of the project really is that we were together for such a long and for such an intense period we really had to challenge ourselves and resolve a lot of the problems. We just had to deal with things, learn to cope and learn to live with each other. So together we made an awful lot of compromises. We put in a lot of effort and the difficulties between the two of us were so far inferior to the benefits that we were able to obtain through working together and the potential that we had in working together.

The partnership was absolutely fundamental, as was the team. So we were part of this bigger team, 18 people in total, 9 people from Britain, 9 people from Sri Lanka. We all had our own work placements throughout both communities and they really spanned like the whole spectrum of community development. We were working with young people, with environmental projects, with the elderly, within primary schools, within day centres, working with adults with learning disabilities. And through sharing all our experiences we, as a whole – even though we did not have the opportunity to work in all the placements – had a much greater understanding of community as a whole. We were also very lucky in the way that we were living and working within quite a close facility. So we were able to share each other's resources. As an example: one partner was working in a day centre and we decided to hold a big Sri Lankan experience day for the local community. It was taking place in the town centre, and the whole group came together and organised dancing, food and music. It was a great opportunity to meet the wide community and to let them speak to us and us to speak to them. It gave them a chance to realise what projects we were actually involved in and to ask questions about the 6 000 hours of voluntary work that we were contributing to their communities. So in doing so, I think we efficiently raised the profile of young people in the community. It was quite an achievement, because they did not really regard young people in a very positive way.

Another formal part of our learning was the educational activity days arranged throughout the programme by the participants. As an example of my educational activity day, I organised with Rwan, my Sri Lankan colleague, a day based on many different art workshops. Our aim was to try and increase people's confidence within our own artwork and to be able to give them some ideas and the

confidence to be able to use these within our work placements. We had arranged a 'recycled fashion' show. Rwan and I had been collecting all this junk from around the town and people had to make two fashion accessories from all this scrap, which they then had to parade on a homemade catwalk. That was a very enjoyable event and a lot of people did actually use some of the ideas that we generated there to enhance their own work placements.

The host families were another really crucial part of the programme. They supported us on very practical and very emotional levels. Through being involved within a host family I generally did feel a very true sense of belonging within both communities. My family was quite a large family. In Britain Kalyani and I lived with one elderly lady. It was very good for Kalyani to open her eyes to a different family structure, a different concept, the fact that one elderly lady could live by herself in a huge house. It was just beyond her reach at the beginning.

Kalyani and I worked in a centre looking at children to increase their educational, social, physical welfare. I just want to emphasise the value of the programme to me and one of the most powerful things for me was to learn about the diversity within the British community. I never really considered how much diversity there was in Britain and how much it really contributed to Britain. But also the diversity of people and how together all our different eyes, ideas could really enrich our own understanding of ourselves and the people we are working with. It was an absolutely fantastic resource and one of the highlights of the programme. We created so many opportunities for ourselves by drawing on people's ideas and by being able to put those into practice in such a positive way. I could still talk a lot about the benefits for myself of being a volunteer, but I'll have to come to the end so thank you very much for listening, and as you say in Sinhala: Ayubowan.

More

- www.vso.org.uk/volunt/pdd/wyma.htm
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Step by Step

Presented by Tracy Dunne

I am from Ireland and I'm here to present the Step by Step programme. I will firstly explain what the Step by Step programme is; secondly I will show how this programme can have an impact on young volunteers' lives and thirdly I will give my own personal experience of being a volunteer on the Step by Step programme.

This programme is a specific project under the umbrella of the



Tracy Dunne, former Step by Step volunteer, during the preparatory seminar for the Youth Convention.

European Voluntary Service. The European Voluntary Service programme (EVS) is open to all young people between the ages of 18 and 25 who are residents of our European Union countries or of those countries which are planning to join the European Union in the coming years. The EVS aims to be accessible to all young people without discrimination and without precondition for participation.

Well, what is the Step by Step programme? One of the main aims is to use volunteering to tackle social exclusion in the most marginalized communities in Europe. It is a relatively new programme that has developed since its pilot stages in 1995. For the last 3 years the programme has used the name Step by Step because it encourages a more flexible approach than within the general EVS programme. The special nature of the Step by Step is that it supports, encourages and empowers young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in volunteering. Young people can go away for periods of three weeks up to six months instead of having to go immediately for at least 6 months. It takes into account the difficulties and problems that the people in the target group are faced with in their socially excluded communities. What do I mean by 'being socially excluded'? A young person may be excluded from various activities because of the following reasons: educational, economic, cultural and geographical.

Just to give you an idea of some of the problems related to this target group: The area in which for example I live is classed as a marginalised area, the population is around 36,000; the area suffers from a high level of anti-social behaviour. For young people negative peer pressure can be great, and there is a temptation to become involved in crime and stealing, joyriding, drugs –including as dealers. Just last week we had a young man who died of an overdose of ecstasy. Young people living here have very limited horizons and racist attitudes are common. Also in the area over half the population is unemployed. There is a very high level of teenage pregnancy, many young people are early school leavers and there are many family problems.

Now I'd like to explain to you my own experience in the Step by Step programme. I heard about the project in 1995. I attended a short preparation event with eleven other young people from different countries. I was very nervous about going away on my own. I had never travelled alone. I didn't know the language. It was the first time I was leaving my family and I didn't know much about the country

where I was going. I came here to Brussels in 1995, thinking I would only stay for 3 weeks, I stayed for 3 months. I was a volunteer in a youth centre in a Moroccan neighbourhood. The experience in Brussels gave me a chance to take a stock of my life. It also helped me to realise that I myself was living in a socially excluded area, something I had never thought about before. I started to regret that I had left school early at 14. But life went on as before. Temporary work from time to time in a fish factory, mixing with the same friends, still living at home with my family.

In 1997 I had the chance to participate in a training weekend for experienced volunteers to learn how to support future volunteers from the same background. While I was there, I decided I would benefit more from going away again. So I did, this time to France and for six months. Although my first motivation was to escape from the situation back home, I realised later how much I had learnt: For example, *je parle un peu de français*, I took French lessons. From the other volunteers living with me I learnt about many cultures and habits. I realised how many young people had ambitions and careers I never really had. I became more independent. I also learnt to use the public transport, to get around for example there in Paris by metro. Especially when I went home that time I realised that I too could go back into education. Now three and a half years later I am in third level education in University College Cork where I am studying for a degree in youth and community work, with one year to go. To get started there, I first did two part-time study years to help me get back into the system I had left. My ambition now, when I finish my training, is to go back home into my own community and give my skills and education back to the young people who are socially excluded.

To conclude I hope my own case gives you an example on how young people, especially those who are isolated, excluded or marginalised, can benefit from a period of volunteering. With the Step by Step programme, there have been many examples like my own. It has dramatically changed the course of many young people's lives and influenced them in positive ways. Some like me have found themselves back in the education system, others have found work while they had been unemployed for long periods before becoming a volunteer, some have used volunteering to really break with a negative circle back home, for e.g. one young man who had just left a drug detox centre volunteered for a short period and decided to stay for nine months and has now had the courage to return home, feeling strong enough to resist falling back into temptation. The programme certainly builds young people's confidence and self-esteem, helping them to take control once more and maybe even for the first time of their own lives. The conditions of the Step by Step programme adapted to the needs of young people gives this target group an equal opportunity to go away and experience life in another country. The personal development opportunities are enormous. I hope this possibility will continue to be available for many other excluded young people in the years to come, because the energy created can bring positive effects for the community in which they live. I would like to thank the Youth Forum and everybody for listening, and also Hazel Low, the co-ordinator of the project, 'cause I love her and thanks to everybody.

More

- The Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) has published together with the Step by Step network and in co-operation with the Youth Forum a booklet on the project. It is available through AVSO or the Youth Forum.
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Atelier Musique au Club du Savoir et de la Solidarité

presented by Abigail Curry

My name is Abi Curry. I'm English and I'm here representing the project *Atelier Musique au Club du Savoir et de la Solidarité* which is a youth project run by ATD Fourth World in Bordeaux, France. I'd like to begin by talking about my own personal involvement in ATD Fourth World. I had always wanted to be involved in an organisational movement and in particular in a movement that worked with young people from very varied backgrounds. I was very aware of the differences between people at school. I was shocked to see this disparity disappear when I studied at University, as the young people I'm thinking of did not have the opportunity. After I finished my degree and had more free time I started to look for some kind of organisation. And for the past two years I have been very lucky because I have been working as a language assistant, which has given me a lot of free time to dedicate myself to such an organisation, which is ATD.



Abigail Curry

We started our music project in September 2000. The times I spend in ATD are always special. The atmosphere that is created by working on projects with young people from different backgrounds allows a richness and creativity to be discovered. We learn and discover new things together. Often relationships are developed which one would never have imagined. At the beginning of the music project we just want to discover aspects of music together. For example rhythm, singing, musical instruments, rap, going to the music library to take out CDs, going to the theatre to watch famous French musicals, and rewriting well-known songs with our own lyrics. We just wanted to do all things connected with music that we didn't normally do in our own lives. Gradually we realised that we wanted to do something much more ambitious and more exciting. We wanted to create our own musical. Our musical will be filmed, which allows us to work at our own pace. That also means that our film becomes an example for other groups of young people in the future. This is something in particular

that we want to achieve. We want to be able to communicate to other people who are not aware of the poverty that exists in their own country. The film is in the final stages of being made and I will show you some extracts today of some finished video-clips and some parts which are yet to be edited.

The story is of a group of young people living in a high rise block. They have various things that they want to communicate to each other and to the outside world. They do this by singing songs which are well known but of which we have changed the words. Later we will record a sound track for our film, but for now you can still hear some of the original words. [The film is shown]



Abigail Curry (ATD), Tadej Reissner (LEGEBITRA) and Tracy Dunne (Step by Step) during the preparation week-end.

I think that the music project is only able to exist because each of us wants it to and each of us adds to its force by being there. We needed each other for different activities to be enjoyed. For example, those who are more used to singing from past experience help those who are not used to singing to be able to feel comfortable and able to join in. Similarly, those who have rapped before or who are more interested in rap music help the others to have a go at rapping. In particular the rewriting of songs is always done in a partnership of young people from different backgrounds so that everyone has a chance to raise their voice. Each person needs the other one to push and motivate him or her and to keep going. We have often found it difficult to continue with the film as it takes a long time to get everyone together to film just a few moments but we have persevered and we are proud of what we have achieved.

So the partnership of young people from different backgrounds is a success and constitutes the spirit and power of the project. Each one gained an experience and richness they can then take out with them into 'the real world'. I'd like to read out a quotation from another young person from another ATD project which sums up the point, I believe: '*Si on se rencontre entre différents milieux, les barrières vont être diminuées*'.

Another interesting aspect of our project is the constant evaluation process. We are constantly meeting to ask ourselves whether we are allowing every young person to participate and do the things that *they* want to do. So that the person who doesn't feel comfortable singing can do something else to show to everyone, or the person who wants to do a dance but who is shy can do another form of dance. For example the young man in the video, Patrick, didn't want to participate in any of the activities we did. But he was very proud to rewrite the song about his life and for his life to be featured in the video.

Finally I'd like to say something which is not directly related to the music project but which was also mentioned today by the Step by Step programme. From my experience in ATD in the past two years, I think that it is very important that programmes exist, that all people, especially young people from excluded backgrounds can participate in some form of voluntary action. Often at ATD people talk to me about how I have moved away from my country to do voluntary work and they say that they would like to do the same thing. So I think it is of paramount importance that such programmes exist for all

young people from all backgrounds and that we ask ourselves how this can be put into place. Thank you very much.

More

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VIDES Kenya 2000

Presented by Moya Rylands & Louise Queen

My name is Moya Rylands and I will be presenting our project with Louise Queen. We are both volunteers with VIDES UK. For the project we'll tell you about today, we had different roles. My role was as facilitator for the preparation. Louise was a member of our project team. You're probably wondering what VIDES UK is and what it stands for. It's part of an international organisation and it stands for an "international voluntary organisation for the education and development of young people" in Italian, because the organisation originally comes from Italy. That really is what we are about: Training young people



Louise Queen, volunteer with VIDES UK - Kenya 2000

and encouraging them to develop, and working with children, particularly those in disadvantaged areas, which is where most of our projects are targeted.

Our work to date has mainly consisted of 'formation camps' in the UK, which are summer camps where our volunteers gain training and provide activities for children and young people in a disadvantaged area. We also offer opportunities for our volunteers to work abroad to have individual experiences ranging from 3 months to 12 months.

This quote sums up very much the way we work *'If you tell me something I may forget it, if you show me I might remember but if you involve me I will understand'*. And that is how we try to work with all of our projects by making our young people involved in as much and as many of the aspects as possible. The project we would like to tell you about today is Kenya 2000, which was a project we set up to respond to the request from our volunteers for new projects, for the next level of experience. We

invited volunteers who had previously completed a project with us to apply for a group project. We did this 18 months before the project was to take place. They were selected by our executive committee and 10 volunteers were finally invited to four preparation weekends for our project.

For the planning, we took a basic project management approach. It was to be the next step for volunteers in ownership and responsibility. Until then projects had been planned for them and tasks delegated. With this project more of our volunteers would have ownership. We provided facilitation rather than leadership and we empowered our volunteers. We invited them to define their own project, to put together an aim from the very early stages of what they hoped to achieve with their projects. We asked them to look at the timing. They had 18 months to plan and just 3 weeks for the project. They had to look at the costing. We do not have any paid work within our organisation, and the whole project was to be funded by the volunteers who took part through their fund-raising and through personal contributions if appropriate. We had all sorts of fund-raising activities. It was also important that the volunteers were able to fund volunteers from Kenya who would join our project. And we asked the volunteers to look at the quality measurements, to look at how they would know whether our project had been a success.

For the project they worked in planning teams, they looked at practical matters, everything from the organising of transport to resources; they looked at fund-raising and they looked at the project itself, planning all of the activities that would form part of the project. I will now invite Louise to come up and tell you about the project and to tell you a little bit more about our aims and how we try to achieve them.

Louise Queen: I am from Scotland, one of those small countries in the United Kingdom. I have been a member of VIDES since 1994. Previous to that I had been involved in voluntary work since the age of 14. During my part of the presentation, my role is to talk to you about Kenya 2000, which is the title that we gave to our project, and the impact that it had on the volunteers, and in particular – as a volunteer myself – the impact that this project had on my life.

Moya previously mentioned that the first step of defining our project was to set an aim and the aim therefore impacted on every single thing that we did as we were planning our project and as we delivered our project with our Kenyan volunteers. The aim of the project was actually to go to Kenya to share lives and cultures and in doing so make a difference to each other. So it's very much about the impact that the project has on us as individual volunteers as well as on the local community that we worked in.

For the first part of our project we spent four days in Embu in order to meet our Kenyan colleagues basically. During that time, the aim was to build some form of team spirit, which is very important to the foundation and the working of VIDES UK. We spent a lot of time in planning and preparation, which was basically about developing a partnership and shared responsibility. We had time together on formation and training and we also shared our cultures together. We had taken things over from the UK, we had taken over different foods, different styles of clothing and the Kenyans had also brought with them from their families things about their cultures to share with us. We shared bits about our lives, our personal stories, our families and we shared a lot on our beliefs and values. This enabled us to get to know each other and to understand each other a little bit better and it developed a sense of equality and respect for each other.

After four days of preparation together we travelled to Namanga which is a border town with Tanzania. Each day we worked with approximately 500 to 600 children. I would like to say that they

were local children, but they weren't. The children travelled a fair distance every day; one young boy of the classes that I taught travelled approximately an hour and a half to two hours every morning. And we start the school at 8.30 in the morning so he had to get himself out of his bed at 6 o'clock in order to be able to get to school on time and they were all there every single day on time. That says a lot of the children and the respect they had for their education. The first part of the day, the morning, was spent in formal education. During that period, we divided into teams where we taught the children English, mathematics and Kiswahili. Obviously the UK volunteers took the responsibility for the delivery of the English programme, and the Kenyan volunteers took responsibility for the delivery of the Kiswahili programme and together we taught mathematics.

Most of our volunteers were from the ages of 17 to about 24 and I was the oldest. Therefore most of them did not have any opportunity or any experience of teaching, so this was a very daunting experience for them from which they gained a tremendous amount. In the afternoon we spent time in informal education, which is very much a part of our VIDES lifestyle. At that time we had games and sports, arts and crafts, singing and dancing with the children. This part of the afternoon was really about building relationships with the children, building their confidence, extending their use of the English language and also about sharing their personal stories. The time allowed them to share their culture and gave us an opportunity to share our culture and experiences with the children. From the children we learnt a tremendous amount about the simplicity of their lives and about the daily acceptance of their lives. One of the phrases that the children would use all the time was "Hakuna Matata", which is from the Lion King and means "no worries, it doesn't matter". Their deep simplicity and acceptance of everything really touched me as a person.

Two things that I will always remember from the informal education I would like to share with you: In Scotland as in Brussels we have a tremendous amount of rain, and therefore in Africa having the sunshine was lovely but it was very hot. In the area where we played with the children it was red and dusty, and one afternoon as I travelled up to the school with some other volunteers, we heard the children singing one of the songs we had taught them. It was a group of 150 children in a circle, dancing and singing to the song 'I'm singing in the rain'. It was a sharp contrast because they had not had rain for many, many months and it's something that I will always remember. Another image that I will remember is this large Masai warrior playing with a parachute and among all of these children it certainly was something that I will always remember.

At the end of our project with the children we had a big celebration and the theme that we chose for the celebration was an African theme called 'Harambe' which is basically about unity in diversity. The children who attended the activities of our project came from very diverse backgrounds, religious backgrounds in particular. The celebration brought all the children and their families together and therefore in some way we attempted to unify the town through our experience.

The next part of our project was basically about community, which is a very big area for us as VIDES volunteers. It's a key element of being a VIDES volunteer because basically it is about developing interpersonal, personal skills and more important life skills for young people. It's about responsibility and accountability. Part of community is about living together which brings about many challenges, a tremendous amount of richness and diversity. Part of our aim was that in sharing our lives and cultures we would make a difference to each other. As we evaluated our project I can certainly say that that aim was actually fulfilled, that we did share our lives and cultures and that we did make a difference to each other.

Team work was very much a part of what we did. We did domestic chores together, we did all the shopping, etc. As part of our life, we planned and we prepared together and we did all of our marking together and this was also about encouraging shared responsibility for the project. Sharing our lives and cultures was about friendship and support and also as a part of our lifestyle we evaluated together. This was vitally important to the success of our project because it gave us the volunteers a voice. It gave us an opportunity for praise and encouragement of each other and it was about breaking down barriers and again encouraged equal ownership of the project. Another area of our daily living was formation and this was about support. It gave us the time to stop and to think about our personal experience. And I don't have to mention to you that in our very fast paced society, especially for young people, stopping and thinking and reflecting on their experience is not something they often do, but for VIDES volunteers it is a very important element within the training. It was also about building community and the personal development of volunteers, building confidence, self-esteem and again providing them with skills regarding ways of working with children and young people.

There were many challenges within the project: the cultural differences, the language, tiredness, physical conditions of a number of children and the lack of resources. In conclusion to the project, we obviously ask ourselves was our project successful and does it have a future? We would say yes, it was successful. We evaluated together there, we evaluated as a UK group when we came back, and we evaluated with our executive committee. We received feedback from the children and from the school and we obviously had the personal reflection of the volunteers.

For myself as a person, this certainly was a great achievement. As a young girl from the West of Scotland, at the age of 14 I had always wanted to be of service in a developing country and for me this was an opportunity to do it. I had never had the courage to do it before and therefore being a part of a group gave me the support and the opportunity to achieve something I had always wanted to achieve. Also, for me the world has become more open and Africa is no longer just a place on television. It's a part of my life. I did not go as a tourist. I went as somebody who had the opportunity to share the experience of the African people and their culture and that has certainly changed my life and my values.

Reflections of the other volunteers from the UK: The experience convinced me that in breaking down barriers between cultures, the differences between us had become insignificant. From Laurenzia in Kenya: We feel that VIDES UK has sown a seed, we will not let it die soon, it will be growing into VIDES Kenya.

Does the project have a future? Yes we do. In the midst of extreme poverty in Africa, we were told by the African people that there is always hope. They live for today, they do not live for tomorrow, but here in Europe we really live for tomorrow and believe that there is hope. And finally I would just like to say that we have "Kenya revisited", which is a programme which is running now at the moment with our volunteers and they have established things again. We also have set up a fund from one of our young volunteers in the UK who tragically died in an accident during the year. Her family and friends raised money and we have sent that over to Namanga where they have a teaching fund, to pay for two teachers for three years. Thank you.

More

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Round Table Discussion 11: "Volunteering – what's in it for the Volunteers?"

Chair: Anne Marie Sigmund

With:

- Prof. John Annette,
Director of Curriculum, Learning and Quality, School of Social Sciences, Middlesex, University of London; President of the Council for Citizenship and Learning in the Community
- Sarah Greaves
World Youth Millennium Awards
- Ms Hazel Low,
Project Co-ordinator Step by Step

John Annette:

Let me say how pleased I am to be invited to this session and to say how impressed and even inspired I am by the project presentations that I have seen so far. What's really impressive is to think about the amount of knowledge, skills and understanding that is actually represented by the activities that we have seen so far, and the level of knowledge, expertise and skills that have been involved in all these projects. What I really want to briefly speak about is the importance of volunteering as a valuable learning experience and perhaps the need for some formal recognition of the learning that is involved in volunteering. As Anne-Marie said, in addition to the title that I have on the programme, I'm also chair of the council for citizenship and learning in the community. This is a network of over a 100 university programmes in the UK where students and staff organise student volunteering in local communities and the students get academic recognition or credit for their learning through volunteering. We're also networking with other European universities to try to develop a European network.

The other thing I wanted to say is what is striking is the diversity of volunteering. When you think of Europe as a multicultural and a multifaith society, it's striking the variety of settings within which volunteering can take place. Indeed this is not only working through NGOs but increasingly young people are being involved in community based development and in organisations. We tend to think of voluntary sector organisations, but I think that increasingly

young people across Europe are becoming involved in more community-based development activities, regeneration activities. If you look at volunteering as a learning experience, I would argue that it promotes not only self-development but also active citizenship. I notice in 'Eurospeak' recently we have this term *non-formal education* that is being used. It's a useful term. For me, however, volunteering is a form of *experiential learning*. It values the nature of the experience. It also emphasises the importance of reflection that is the level of understanding that you get from that experience, not just the experience itself but also the reflective understanding that leads to your self-development.



Prof. John Annette: "I would argue that volunteering promotes not only self-development but also active citizenship". Panel Discussion II focused on the question what volunteers themselves gain from their volunteering.

Another key issue here is also the importance of working in partnership, either with the client groups or with the communities, be they in Europe or abroad, that you're working with. The need to make sure that this is an equal experience, a shared experience between partners. In the United Kingdom we refer

to this as *active learning in the community*. This is sometimes also known in the United States as service learning. This takes place in higher education, in schools and increasingly lifelong learning. It is through the community for young people, particularly young people outside formal education and unemployed young people especially. Young people from ethnic and minority communities. To what extent are people from the ethnic and minority communities of Europe actually represented in the formal structures of power in the European youth voluntary sector organisations? I think that's a challenge for many of them.

When you think of the learning outcomes of volunteering, there is the level of knowledge. Just think of the expertise, the amount of pedagogy involved in working with refugee groups, the psycho-social education or the amount of legal knowledge, the political knowledge dealing with the campaigning against trafficking, the brutal trade of trafficking in young women, etc, etc – the intercultural awareness. I think the amount of knowledge that is gained is quite remarkable.

Secondly, there are the skills and capabilities that young people develop through volunteering. We call this in the UK 'key skills' and these are now being formally recognised in schools and universities. They range from self-confidence to communication skills, team working, critical thinking, intercultural awareness. There is another aspect of volunteering which older people are particularly keen about, socialisation. I think the European Union is very keen on this because it wants to socialise youth. The academic term for this is social capital. But for me it is also about

active citizenship, it's not just about socialising youth, it's about empowering youth. It's about an older generation not just handing a torch down to a younger generation but carrying the torch together, learning from each other. Older generations are learning from younger people, and you're learning from the older generations and ignoring us when we are being stupid and bureaucratic. So I think there is that sense in which there is intergenerational learning, that is part of socialisation.

But I would like to argue that active citizenship is crucial, that empowerment that one gets through volunteering. The evidence is that young people across Europe are increasingly alienated from the political system not only within their nation state but increasingly this distant thing called the European Union. The question is how do we link the idealism and the energy that is involved in volunteering; the evidence is youth are volunteering. How do we link that to this issue, how do we regenerate this sense of European citizenship, the sense of European identity? I will argue volunteering is a key way to do that. The sort of experiences that you probably had this weekend, learning from each other, rehearsing, and then the intercultural awareness that you developed across cultures and working together, supporting each other in your presentations. To me that's about European identity, that's about European citizenship as much as learning about the formal institutions about the European political process.

It is also about networking. Networking across Europe, the need to develop opportunities for volunteering and shared experiences not only within your local communities, your nation states, but across the States of Europe, if we are going to develop an active citizenship for Europe through volunteering.

And then finally the issue of accreditation or recognition. This is a very important issue. In the UK as I said in many universities, now this is part of the curriculum, you can get academic credit for volunteering as part of the curriculum. In schools, as part of the new citizenship curriculum young people will be given the opportunity to get recognition for their volunteering in their local communities and indeed knowledge of the voluntary sector is an important part of the new citizenship subject in British schools.

But in addition to that, it's about life-long learning , about providing training and education



Hazel Low (Step by Step, at centre): "The challenge for all of us in voluntary organisations and those of us who are facilitating volunteer programmes is to be aware of these different starting points and not to impose a learning objective on people who may have very different objectives."

opportunities through volunteering, not just for young people in schools in higher education but for unemployed young people, for people from black and ethnic minorities communities, from refugee communities, who are not of the volunteering experience, who must become part of the volunteering experience. They must be able to participate in these activities and gain recognition and training from these opportunities. So, I would argue that therefore volunteering is a *very* important learning experience. It's not only for your self-development to become better volunteers and more professional, indeed that's important professional and how you carry out the volunteer activities, but it's also about active citizenship. Thank you.

Hazel Low:

One of the things that struck me most about the presentations was their diversity. The word diversity was used lots of times and I think it must be reiterated. What strikes me about the presentations today is the diversity of the starting points of the volunteers. Where they were, where they firstly got involved in volunteering, and how differently they were able to set their own learning objectives, because I believe very much that what people learn through volunteerism is what they are setting out to learn. And that's going to be different for all the individuals who are getting into it. Whether they choose to volunteer on a local basis, in their own local community first, or whether they choose to go abroad and volunteer abroad. That's going to teach them a whole range of different things depending on where they choose to do it. They are also very differently able to express what it is they want to learn out of volunteering. I think the challenge for all of us in voluntary organisations and those of us who are facilitating volunteer programmes is to be aware of these different starting points and not to impose a learning objective on people who may have very different objectives to get out of that.

For example, when people ask about the Step by Step programme, I often hear how is it going on the employability score? Have they learnt employability skills? I think I have an allergy to that kind of expression, because yes there are lot of hard skills learnt through volunteering. Many of the Step by Step volunteers have actually gone on to jobs but there have been jobs that haven't necessarily much to do with the practical experiences that they gained through their volunteering.

Last week I was working with some social and youth workers talking about access in European programmes for this target group and they very rightly made the difference between the hard skills and the soft skills that come from volunteering. I think it's very difficult to measure how much is learnt for example in terms of relationship skills that people develop or how much they have learnt about themselves when they've been volunteering, which were some of the objectives that the people today have outlined that they had for themselves. So we shouldn't become too fixed either with how to quantify what skills people are learning and we should also recognise all the human qualities.

I was struck by something one of the young people said in an evaluation meeting we had recently, he went for five weeks and he stayed for five months – we have a habit of doing this in Step by Step projects. He actually thanked the project people who had hosted him for that period of time for what he had learnt during that time. And he said to them, you've tamed me, you've made me human and you've helped me grow up. I think that's very difficult to generalise for lots of young people. But I think these are the most important things that we are trying to do through

our volunteering, and I mean all the volunteers have outlined a very big learning step on all these levels. Thank you.

Caroline Frischkopf (Swiss Youth Council):

One of our major projects this year is to launch a national certificate for volunteerism. For us in Switzerland it's important for young people to receive recognition in order to show what they have gained, particularly when they return to professional life. My question is, if you also have such intentions in other countries?

John Annette:

There is some discussion in the United Kingdom of creating standards for the certification of voluntary work as distinct from the professional training programmes in youth work, social work, etc. I think the problem is this sheer diversity of volunteering and also, to be perfectly honest, the different large voluntary sector organisations which run their training programmes. But that is something that is also happening in the UK. I know that there are projects elsewhere to try to develop national standards. I don't know about other European projects that develop a specific certificate, a nation-wide certificate. That's the first time I've heard about it, I'd like to learn more about it.

Anne-Marie Sigmund:

It is perhaps something we could include in our package as the ESC, to compare what exists in the framework of voluntary services in Europe in order to elaborate some proposal. I think that's a very pertinent question.

Diana Perez-Buck:

I have a question for either Tracy or Hazel. Step by Step is a programme aimed at socially excluded young people. I am wondering to what extent you emphasise that as you are reaching out to young people to encourage them to participate in Step by Step. I imagine that many young people who are socially excluded don't necessarily see themselves as socially excluded or don't want to see themselves in that category. So I am wondering what techniques you use to reach out to them and inform them of Step by Step.

Hazel Low:

What we have to do is obviously work through the youth and social workers who are working with this target group. Interestingly enough, one of the things they wouldn't probably highlight is the certification or the employability value of the programme. This is because a lot of this particular target group feels that they have possibly been overexposed to the vocational training schemes and certification and have to prove that they have learnt something. So it's very much more based on the intercultural exchange that they would highlight, because many of these young people would never have had the chance to travel abroad when they come to Step by Step. I am not saying that for them and their families the employability aspect wouldn't be interesting.

A lot of them, however, don't have the notion of volunteering in the first place and many of them wouldn't be involved in their own communities very much in a voluntary capacity so they have been involved mainly as consumers of services in their own environments. I think that one of the

most important chances that this kind of programme gives young people when they can go away and be exposed to volunteering in another country is that they actually change roles. They stop being those who are being assisted and they start being those who are giving and contributing actively to society. But that would be probably a lot further down the line, after we have worked with them for some time before they would have that level of debate about it. In the first instance I think it is the exotic nature of volunteering in another country which would most grab their attention.

Muslim Sharaffedin (Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations):

Of course volunteering is something very interesting and it's also a form of school where we can learn as Professor John Annette said to become a participative citizen. Of course the results that are obtained are very satisfying, because volunteers are highly motivated since nobody forces the volunteers to do what they do. But from our experience at least we have seen that often it is quite ephemeral, it does not last. So how do we move from the stage of volunteering to the stage of long lasting involvement and commitment?

John Annette:

In a way this relates back to the relationship between volunteering and the State on the one hand and perhaps business support on the other. The need for sustainability in order to meet the needs of the communities, to actually provide sufficient financial support so that people can develop the level of professional skills needed as volunteers to make a difference in their communities. And that does raise the possible question of payment although I think that we all find that it's a difficult question. I think that to this extent it raises the question also of the links between volunteering and the local communities themselves. I have been very impressed in the UK and looking elsewhere of youth involved in community development, community regeneration and these are very long-term projects. These are often funded by the European Social Fund or by other national initiatives, including faith-based community action in a number of cases.

These do provide very sustained long term volunteering opportunities that really do make a difference to local communities. But having said that, one has to accept the fact that the world of volunteering is very diverse. On the other hand, I would say that most people involved in volunteering never get it out of their system. I was involved in volunteering as a school student in University and I still volunteer. It becomes part of your life-long learning. To that extent one has to accept this aspect of volunteering as well.

Helmut Warmenhoven (Youth Action for Peace):

In my organisation there is a big discussion about certification. My main question is what's the real aim of such a certificate? What do you want to do with it. I'm going to volunteer and then I'm going to learn this and that and then I'm going to have a certificate. So we can publish everywhere 'Come volunteer with us, then we will give you a certificate and afterwards you can find a better job or put down on your CV I was a volunteer'. I don't understand how you can combine that with learning personal skills. In a way I would like to know from the volunteers sitting here. Do you need a certificate to prove the skills that you learnt? And if that be the case, what are you going to do with the certificate?

Anne-Marie Sigmund:

I think that learning personal skills is quite compatible with volunteerism. I don't think that that is the problem. The problem is rather that the people who carry out voluntary service can prove that they have a certain degree of experience and skills.

Arjen Bos:

I'm wondering if you should start formalising a non-formal learning experience like that? What does it add? Isn't it a threat to the true passion that is behind that non-formal learning experience? It might become the specific reason why people start doing that kind of thing to get the certificate. For me at least, the experience is more based on the desire that people feel.

John Annette:

I don't think that all volunteering should be accredited. I think that volunteers should have the opportunity, if they so desire, to have the learning they get from volunteering accredited. There are many working-class young people and ethnic minority young people who find it very difficult for employment and really would benefit from the formal recognition of the knowledge and skills gained through volunteering. I also think there are lots of young people who want that opportunity, who want the certification of the learning they are getting. It's an opportunity that people should have. It is not something that should be required of volunteers. However, I think that all volunteering is a learning experience and all volunteers should be encouraged to learn from their volunteering, to engage in reflective learning. That does not mean there has to be a certificate in the end.

C. "What needs to be done to support and further promote volunteering?"

Moderation and Opening Statement: Elisabeth Hardt, Vice President of AVSO and Secretary General of the EFIL (European Federation for Intercultural Learning).

I am here on behalf of AVSO, which co-organised this convention. The association was formally set up in 1996 and aims to promote full-time, long-term voluntary activities through lobbying, training and partnership building at the European level.

To come back to the message from the Bosch Foundation's manifesto that we heard this morning: "Every young person should have the opportunity to volunteer". This particular session will focus on how governments and NGOs, local authorities, foundations or private business can facilitate and support the creation of new platforms and networks to allow these opportunities to exist. We have heard that governments and NGOs need each other in the face of problems that are more and more complex, yet on a scale that the governments cannot immediately see. When we hear the grassroots work that is being done by the Latvian Centre for the prevention of trafficking in women or when we see that NGOs have to be able to network as well and support should be given to networks as a natural follow-up of many projects. The European dimension and the working across boundaries are certainly one of the most natural follow-ups to many projects.

Yet, especially in this European collaboration, we see a lot of difficulties. At the moment AVSO is involved in researching many of the problems that are faced by volunteers: residence permits, work

permits, visa problems, taxation problems and the like. Yet at the same time many NGOs are concerned about an over-institutionalisation of the voluntary sector, which would take away what perhaps NGOs are best at, which is *to challenge* - as we heard this morning with the project 'The Bet' – to confront, to catalyse, to become a *dynamisateur*, to irritate, to oppose and to perform practical actions at the local level. We also would like to address the issue of sustainability and funding for many projects, which of course is an everyday struggle. I hope that the projects that we will hear from now will be able to touch upon some of these issues.



LEGEBITRA - Empowering Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Slovenia

Presented by Tadej REISSNER

I would like to start with the location of Slovenia because many people confuse Slovenia with Slovakia and I would just like to clear this up. It is a very small country of 2 million people. Its capital is Ljubljana, the biggest city with 300,000 people. The point of this is that it is a small city, it's a small community and usually in small cities we can find small town attitudes. So it is difficult for gay men and women to *come out* and especially for young people. This is the reason why LEGEBITRA came into existence in Slovenia.

The gay movement was active in Slovenia when Slovenia was still a part of Yugoslavia. It started back in 1980. But since the war for independence in 1991, the issue of gay liberation has been pushed to the side, so gay activism has stopped for a while. The reason for creating this youth group was to provide a forum for young gay people. Let me illustrate this with a story. When I was a young gay man just barely coming out, the only place I could go to as a young gay man was the night club. What I missed in the night club – of course you can have fun there, you can have drinks – was you can't have real social contacts, you can't talk with people who think the same around your age. And that's why my friends and I decided to create a youth group which would offer young people a safe place where they could talk and discuss important issues. This actually happened after a training seminar here in Belgium, in Antwerp, organised by IGLYO, the International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organisation. When my friends and I went to this training seminar and got the necessary technical skills to create a youth group, we came back to Slovenia and just decided to do it – and we did it. Three people came to the first activity, and after three years of operations we have 200 people on our mailing list and 20 people come regularly. So I think that is quite a big achievement, especially for a small town such as Ljubljana.

We are not a political organisation, we are a social organisation, which is a very important point. That also creates some problems, and I will come to that later. Our group is basically a social group. We meet weekly and have discussions. We have different types of activities, lectures, cultural activities, sports or recreational activities, promotional actions where we go around the town sticking posters everywhere. It is a pretty good example of voluntary work. It's an information action, almost a revolution because in high schools it is not a very accepted thing and our education system doesn't make room for that.

I also think it is important to say that we have given young people an alternative to the night club scene. We are offering them an opportunity where they can come out and meet during the day in broad daylight and just be among similar people and discuss different topics. I would put the parents meeting among our most important activities. We have an annual parents meeting where we invite the members' parents to come with their children. This is also a good time when young people who have not told their parents yet about their sexuality can see how other parents react to their child being homosexual or bisexual or transgender. For the parents it is an opportunity to meet other parents and a sort of coming out for them, because it is not often that they can discuss this issue openly.

The way we operate is personal, very personal. We advertise our address in the mainstream press, the daily newspaper and all the media where young people can access this information. We have published some flyers, posters etc. We maintain personal contact through letters and e-mails, which we reply to individually, and we offer those who have questions but do not feel comfortable enough yet with a group meeting to come to the youth group assistance office where a welcome team meets with them individually. We do this, because it's often easier for an individual to meet two people than to come into a room full of strangers. Here the young man or woman has the opportunity to ask the questions he/she has and it makes it easier for that person to come to the activity itself. We have had good experiences with this programme, and I think it is a very necessary thing, because in our experience many people come out either to their families or to their friends soon after their first activity in the group. So this is a good example of the impact that our group can have.



"We have given young people an alternative to the night club scene and we are offering them an opportunity where they can come out and meet in broad day light", Tadej Reissner presenting LEGEBITRA

Also, we publish a newsletter that started out as a sheet of paper and is now a 50-page brochure and it is published every month. It is funded by the student organisation and is the only regular gay publication in Slovenia at the moment. All of the work is done by volunteers. It is not paid, and one of the problems I would like to mention is that in Slovenia the idea of volunteering is not very present. As was said earlier, it is not very easy to sacrifice that portion of your spare time for volunteer activities. And generally people laugh at us, because it's not normal yet. It's not acceptable yet to work for other people, why the hell would I do that? So we are trying to educate our group members and we are setting an example for them. We are showing them what it is to work for no money, just for the general good and we try to get them involved. The newsletter is a good result of this, because it is now run independently. A separate board has been established by a group of members who publish the whole thing.

Another problem is that there is little co-operation with other national gay and lesbian groups, because we don't have a political agenda. You have to see that there are two separate directions the gay movement is taking, one is the direction of assimilation into wider society and the other one is the direction of isolation in a group that wants to remain apart from the rest of society. We are taking the assimilation approach. What we are really trying to do with our activities is to empower individuals

within the group so that they will be able to go out and go about their daily lives and feel good about being gay or lesbian – and to project this image to the outside. That changes society, because if you're not afraid to talk about yourself you'll get more exposure and if this exposure is positive it will gain acceptance.

So, I would also like to conclude with an example that happened to me yesterday. Ulvi and I went to a gay bar together, because I wanted to and he was just curious - he is not gay - and he had never been to a gay bar before. He did not believe that I was gay. When we came after this preparation weekend to this gay bar, he said to me that he had changed his opinion on gay men, because before that, he did not have a very positive image of gay people. Now he has changed his attitude. I guess this sums up our mission to have empowered individuals who can project themselves assertively and without shame and thus change the attitude of society and in so doing change the world to make it a better place. Thank you very much.

More

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Youth Volunteer Management Unit - Azerbaijan

Presented by Ulvi Salayev

I am here to represent Azerbaijan. Our project is a joint project of the UNV, UNDP and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of our country. This is considered to be the most successful project ever implemented in a country by the UN system. Recently the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan visited our training. One of our strategies is to promote the idea of volunteering in Azerbaijan and now abroad. This [shows a slide] is one of our team meetings and our national specialist, Vugar, was presenting our project as I do now.

We have two priorities: develop the idea of volunteerism in our country and recruit Azeri youth for local development projects through our office, the Youth Volunteer Management Unit. To promote volunteering we decided to begin by organising mass actions in Baku such as the planting of 253 trees on the boulevards of Baku. Then we also celebrated the international day of volunteering. We held three events: a one-hour talk show on a major TV channel about volunteering with the participation of 92 volunteers; an exhibition on our project; and the distribution of flowers and brochures to the people of Baku. For this third event, we worked in five groups consisting of a total of 100 people. We also adopted a special schedule for the IYV in our country.

We have eight priorities for projects in Azerbaijan: educating refugees and internally displaced people; working with disabled and elderly people - by working, I mean any kind of help during their life; educating and supporting orphans; promoting human rights in Azerbaijan; working for a clean

environment; promoting the restoration of historical monuments; making people aware of AIDS; and fighting drug addiction.

How does our office work? We announce a grant round first and then we announce the recruitment of volunteers. After accepting sub-projects, we assign volunteers to work on these projects. Our office functions with a system of "big brothers" and "big sisters", so who are they? They are staff members of our unit who are responsible for monitoring the project. We also have volunteer teams consisting of 5 to 10 people who select a team leader to work as a liaison agent between our office and the team of volunteers. The volunteers work directly with beneficiaries. I can tell you that when you see a refugee kid happy because he has received a notebook or a pen, it makes you feel happy. He sees that pen as a ticket to a better life because he has nothing. Our country has no financial means. We just cannot support these refugees. We have one million refugees due to the conflict there.

I would also like to draw your attention to one fact: when I went to an orphanage, one of the children considered a volunteer working there as his mother. The orphan was always crying when the volunteer left the orphanage, and now the volunteer would like to adopt him, which I find very touching.

I mentioned mass actions, and I will show you some photos of that: we organise planting activities, we distribute flowers on the national day of volunteers, we clean the beaches, and we clean cages in zoos. Because we are living in a transitional period in our



"Our project really creates a human power base that will change the country", Ulvi Salayev from the youth volunteer management unit in Baku, Azerbaijan.

country we don't have the money to support animals. So we obtained funding for a project to feed the animals, with our volunteers cleaning their cages. The project has now ended, but we did some fundraising and have found five companies to support five animals.

What is it like to be a volunteer in Baku? It is not just working, it is fun, leisure time. The volunteers are spending their free time volunteering. They all have their jobs. They are students but are working as volunteers in our country, and here you see one who educates refugees. We also organise training days to explain the general ideas of volunteerism. So at this training we divide our volunteers into priority groups, meaning refugees, orphanages, etc. and we tell them about the situation. We give our volunteers certificates of appreciation for their contribution. The Minister of Sports congratulates the volunteers at a ceremony, 92 in the first phase, 125 in the second phase.

This project really meets the needs and matches the mentality of our people. In our country when we help elderly people to get on the bus, or we get up to give them our seat, etc that is volunteering and we help people carry heavy bags. That is why this project is very successful in our country. When I ask volunteers why they are doing it, they say that if they themselves do not help their country, nobody will. Our project really creates a human power base that will change the country. Already it is starting to change the mentality of people. Young people are starting to believe that money isn't everything. We

can do something without getting financial appreciation and we believe in a brighter future for our country. I just want to convey a message from our volunteers; our project is supposed to last 2 years and will be finished in February 2002. However, we still hope that the UNV and UNDP will continue the project, because it is a great success in our society. If not, our volunteers have decided to work using their own means. In conclusion I would like to thank the Youth Forum for providing the opportunity to present our project to Europe. It is really important for you to know such a project exists in Azerbaijan. And I would like to thank Christian, Carol-Ann and Laura and special thanks to Arjen who provided very good training over the weekend. Thank you.

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FAR - Youth Centre for Civic Education

Presented by Alexander Hanel

I'm 23 years old. I'm German and work as a volunteer at the FAR youth club. I've been working for eight months in Bulgaria, in Burgas, on the Black Sea. The project is about media education and the consolidation of a youth centre. It is a partnership project financed by the European Union for three years. I came in as a volunteer in the last year of this period, and my service is financed by the Robert Bosch Foundation. What is important about the project is that it is a real exchange. The previous year, a Bulgarian girl went to the German partner organisation.

Maybe I will tell you how I came to Bulgaria to do international youth work, because a lot of people ask me why I chose Bulgaria, which is not such a common destination. First of all, I wanted to go to Poland because I decided after studying history, geography and social education that I wanted to become a teacher. I wanted to go to an Eastern European country, because a few years ago I participated in school exchanges with Poland, the Czech Republic and Russia. I found that exchange programmes and longer stays in a foreign country are very good for learning and getting to know a society. I learnt Polish for two years at University but then the German partner organisation needed a person for Bulgaria, so I chose to go for this Bulgarian adventure.

The Youth Club I am working for is called FAR, meaning lighthouse. It was set up 50 years ago. The place where the youth club is located was, during the socialist period, a kind of youth club, a kind of bookstore for young people to get information. After 1989 it became a place where people could meet for cultural activities. So they organised dance groups, pottery classes, arts and crafts etc. Now with our project, media education was added. The European Union is providing the funding for this in the framework of the PHARE programme. *[A video presentation is shown]*

The "Haus am Maiberg" is the sending organisation. It is an open academy for civic and social education located in Heppenheim, near Frankfurt, in Germany.

This is my host organisation in Burgas. We just have this one office as you can see. We have two full-time workers, my language teacher and the secretary. Our motto is 'we have the chance to change something in society'.This is a sign outside, which is quite important in Bulgaria, to show that it is



In the audience....

being financed with European money which makes it more important for them. What we offer is information. So we have a database, free Internet for people who come to us so they can stay in contact, and also provide a room, equipment and digital camera, for example, for civic education or media education. We organise school newspaper seminars and school radio seminars. We also organise international youth work such as European youth exchanges for two weeks in the summer.

We have volunteers in Germany and Bulgaria, all working for free. We organise excursions in the surrounding area, something that may seem quite usual in other countries but young people in Bulgaria are not used to going out anymore because they stay at home and study the whole day to get good marks. So we give them the possibility to do this and also buy their train tickets. We do surveys for our newsletter. We also paint rooms, do renovation work, graffiti, and organise a cooking competition. We have groups dealing with newspaper and radio work. Bulgarian volunteers go for three months to Germany to work in an office and they get the know-how to bring back to Bulgaria.

More

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Solidarcité

Presented by Annick Sondag

I am going to tell you about a pilot project that started in March. It's an experiment lasting four months. We hope it's not going to stay at the experimental stage. We have plans to take the project much further beginning in September. I'll give some background about the pilot project. It's an initiative of a non-profit making organisation based in Brussels that has been around for 25 years. The organisation works with young people in difficulty. The staff does this by phone or meets with them in person. The organisation started with volunteers and as there was a great need, it received subsidies from the region of Brussels and the French-speaking community of Belgium. When you get subsidies you're very pleased because you can develop things and work more professionally. But you also have to satisfy some very precise criteria, and the subsidy we obtained after two years is one that says that we are a local centre.

The criteria are aid to young people, who are defined as being under 18 years old. However, 60% of the demand we had was from young people between 18 and 25 and that is a paradox because youth goes well beyond young people under 18. Young people are legally considered to be of age at 18. But young people study longer and are financially and emotionally dependent on their parents for a longer period of time. Paradoxically, young people under 18 are the only ones who are supposed to receive aid. We tried to find a solution to this but had to comply with the legal situation pertaining to us and to our subsidy criteria. We tried to find out what we could do to help this other age group between 18 and 25. I assume the situation is similar in other countries. One can get money fairly easily for children but it's more difficult for older age groups.

We particularly focused on two aspects when actually setting up the Solidarcité project: the 18-19-20 year age group, and the uncertainty most young people have when it comes to deciding what they really want to do in terms of study, work – what they want to achieve in their lives. When one comes from a privileged background, not only financially but also intellectually, families allow their children to study for a year and then to change directions and study something else. Or they give them the opportunity to go abroad for a year to learn another language or work for an NGO. But all these things cost families financially and it's sort of a bet on the future. And we realise that among the young people who call our services, families are not prepared to 'risk' giving their child a year off. It's a pity not to try and find a solution so that those less fortunate young people can take a year off. It's a time when they can actually be supported in their choices and think about the future and enjoy their experiences.

Another thing we noticed was that certain young people from more advantaged backgrounds were asked to take part in certain charity events or youth movements to try and participate in certain activities of solidarity. But in schools where the children are not as well off, in what we could perhaps call deprived schools, young people are not encouraged to become involved and to volunteer. It's as if these young people were considered objects to be looked after, objects of solidarity. No one seems to think of asking them to actually become actors in solidarity. We thought that it was actually rather dramatic because they lose faith in themselves and do not develop their full potential in their own family environment. Then when they were proposed certain activities they were ready to take part. There was an example in the winter when we proposed free meals to the homeless. We asked these young people to take part in the operation. First of all they were rather surprised. But then they said, "why not?" They talked about it in their families and asked for food from the local shopkeepers. They

found out that it was really a positive experience for them and that people recognised their acts. Their parents were surprised and very pleased that they took this kind of initiative. And the shopkeepers in their neighbourhood whom they were asking food from changed their attitude towards them. So you have to ask them to become promoters of solidarity themselves and it's value added for them. By chance one of our colleagues read an article in the magazine Marie Claire, which is not a particularly intellectual magazine. But there was an article in it about an initiative in Paris, and I really want to give our French colleagues the credit for their initiative, which they started five years ago and which is called Unis Cité. We went to see them and attended the event where they hand out certificates to the young people. I said that I would like our children to take part in this type of experience.

When I hear about the initiatives that other volunteers are going abroad, it is fascinating to see how things work far away, 2000 km away. It's fine to do this in another country, but I think it's also good to actually do something like that in one's own country and in one's own town and realise that often one lives in ghettos in one's own town. And when I listen to my children saying, well everybody does that and everybody does this, my answer is no it's not true, not everybody. The people you see in your school, in your area are not the same as in another neighbourhood just 1 km away. So we thought it would be interesting to have a kind of citizen's year here in Brussels and based ourselves very much on the French initiative, giving it a kind of Belgian slant.

We ask young people who come from different backgrounds and cultures to get together in a team for 'citizens' year'. Their year is divided between three main activities: service, education and a personal project. In the first activity, they work as a team and provide services to various associations – we are not talking about working for the private sector or offering cheap labour to those who could pay for it. These are associations that do not have the means to improve their buildings, for example. The year is an opportunity for them to provide services to associations that have many different aims and objectives, painting buildings, helping the disabled, the handicapped, helping others with homework etc. During the year we want to have seven or eight placements in this way, addressing different kinds of beneficiaries.

The second area of focus is education. Here we are talking about citizenship education. It takes place throughout the year, once a week and we have a partnership with an association that does citizenship education; we think about what citizenship means, what democracy means and we also have training in conjunction with the various workshops or placements under way. We had one that was three weeks of renovating a building. We had people from certain enterprises and the building industry who came to tell young people how to do this properly. Now the other part of training regards the beneficiaries. For example, the volunteers will now spend four days with blind people riding tandem bicycles. The third area of focus of this year is the personal project, a year off to build one's own project. This is where we give our support to help them with the various steps of building over the year a personal project. We give them time to visit schools, to put questions to professional people in the profession they might like to enter, questions like how can one actually end up in one kind of profession. It takes time to find out what one wants.

On a practical note, we obtained a grant for those young people interested in taking part in the year, because we wanted it to be accessible to all. It's quite clear that somebody who lives on his or her own – because we are addressing young people between 18 and 25 some of whom don't live with their parents anymore – can't take part in this kind of activity if they don't have any means of subsistence. So, we give them a grant. It's a minimum corresponding to just a bit less than what would be called the 'minimex' in Belgium, which is the minimum amount one needs to live on. Thank you.

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Round Table Discussion III: "What needs to be done to support and further promote volunteering?"

Chair: Elisabeth Hardt

With:

- Agneta Derrien, Executive Director of the EYC Strasbourg
- Pierre Mairesse, Head of Youth Unit, DG EAC- European Commission
- Gianni Orsini, Co-ordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service
- Kim Svendsen, European Youth Forum, Secretary General

Kim Svendsen:

Like the previous speakers, I am really impressed about the diversity and the quality of the projects that have been presented to us today. I think I would like to refer to a point that was made by one of the speakers, the way that they had identified the need to initiate an action, which is quite innovative. Indeed the NGO sector has something to offer that is quite unique in that sense compared to the state and the market, and one of our messages would be that we should be very careful to protect this special identity and the need for an integrity for organisations. But the main point should be that there is still a tremendous need for the recognition at all levels of what is going on in the voluntary sector. Both on the individual youth project side but also concerning youth organisations. That issue is of course not a new one but we still need to go further in the sense that we need to promote a better dialogue with the other actors in society: the funders, the donors, the State, so that we will more clearly serve a complimentary role. The second point is that volunteers are a scarce resource in society and this is exactly why we have to be careful in the way that the support from the side of the state to these activities is designed.

They can be experts in various issues as we have surely seen today, but we should not also expect them to be experts in the legal regulations concerning projects or professional fundraising. We need to be very clear and precise and provide clear guidelines and simple procedures for people like you – and me – who would like to continue to promote these types of activity.

Of course, I'm very delighted that we also have the Commission here represented on the panel, because one of the great things that has happened in the last two years is that we've had the time to talk with some of these stakeholders. We sincerely hope that this process of the forthcoming White Paper will make it possible to move even further in this regard. We have come up with a couple of recommendations already and will be happy to make more contributions for as long as is necessary. One of the things that the Youth Forum has campaigned for is a unified visa procedure for people taking part in transnational voluntary service activities, and of course we have stressed the real need for a legal status for volunteers.

Finally, on sustainability, I would also like to say that all the activities we have seen here need a framework. It's important to remember that we had very visible activities presented here, but what makes them possible is that there is a network behind them. This is the question of networking that already was raised in the first presentation this morning. We need to make sure that networks are sufficiently funded and able to multiply and replicate good practice.

Mr Gianni Orsini, CCIVS:

The question that we want to debate here is how can we consolidate volunteering. I think it's difficult to follow with such a theoretical debate after the very concrete, brilliant and very diverse presentations by the volunteers. What we need to do is see how we can draw the best conclusions today. First, I'd like to try and analyse what we have said today, try to identify two separate debates, which perhaps have been left open-ended. Then I'll try to come up with some concrete proposals and see how we can consolidate voluntary service.

For me, the two questions left open-ended today, which show just how complex volunteering is, are, firstly, how do you define voluntary work? We've seen how pluralistic or multifaceted volunteering is. I think there are three levels of volunteering. We've got part time charity work, this basic idea of good will in action; then we've got volunteering for a specific period of time, for instance 6 months or a year for people of a certain age in very specific conditions. I read in an AVSO publication that one can speak about a rite of passage, or if you will an initiation period, So we see then volunteering as an initiation into values. It's an image I like, but maybe it's not correct. I think it merits further and deeper reflection. This is the second form of volunteering. Organised volunteering over a specific period of time. The third form, which some people have tried to present here, is that of volunteering as a life philosophy, as a way of living day to day. This is more complex because it implies clear commitment from day to day and a change in the way of thinking. I don't think that this debate has been concluded. I think that there is a lot of work to be done here but what I would like to see at the end of it all would be volunteering as a way of life. I'd like to see the development of volunteering as a culture.

A second debate that was touched upon today but left open-ended was that of the personal benefit versus the benefit to society and I think this is a very interesting question. Perhaps it is not easy to come up with a cut-and-dry answer to this question. But volunteers have shown us today that we have just as much personal benefit as social benefit. But when we try to go further than this and talk about certification, for instance, we see that there is a wide range of opinion and approaches to what the personal benefit of volunteering is. When we talk about personal benefit, don't we risk seeing it turn into personal gain, and calling into question the whole idea behind volunteering. I think it's a very fine line.

Perhaps I could bring these two debates together and this could give rise to some problems – I am thinking of the organised form of voluntary service and the question of personal benefits. For example, in legislation on volunteering there could be a clause that says that the volunteer can benefit from remuneration in terms of transport costs, or entrance fees etc. and any other form of benefits which could provide impetus for volunteering. So, theoretically we could put into legislation this idea of personal gain, which goes above the noble vision of volunteering we've had so far. I'm not saying that this is good or bad. I'm just saying that there is a danger that this idea of personal gain will end up creeping into legislation. I think that needs to be said.

For the movement that I represent at least, volunteering is a kind of virus if you will, it's like a magical force which is contagious. People can change their attitudes and over time society can change and become better and I think that's the type of volunteering we want to promote. So we should ask ourselves how we can consolidate this type of volunteering. How can we make sure that volunteering is contagious and that everybody catches the bug? Also we don't want to simply preach to the converted, we want to reach other people as well, we want to go to schools, to business, to governments, to prisons, to go beyond the borders of Europe as well. I mean, today, we talked mostly just about Europe. I think most of the people presented activities within Europe, but of course that can go beyond Europe's borders as well. I don't think we want to think about volunteering in terms of a fortress Europe. I think it needs to go beyond all borders, beyond physical borders and usual borders of traditional volunteering.

So perhaps then I could move on to my second idea, i.e. what sort of proposals can we have in order to consolidate volunteering? We need to talk about partnerships with the government, administration. This is under way, slowly. It's starting to become more and more a concrete and positive relationship between these two types of organisation. But I really think we need to go even further, we need to have partnerships with business as well. I think we need to understand what this could signify. This could lead business people to understand what volunteering means. It could go beyond simply giving donations to charities. It could become something like getting professionals to train people to share their knowledge. That could be a possible idea. But we also want to ensure that volunteers can provide impetus for volunteering in businesses. So theoretically after people have retired from work, they can get involved in volunteering. I think another thing we need to look at is this code of ethics. A code of ethics could be a way to help spread volunteering. In associations we try to be consistent in our approach when working towards objectives. But in businesses as well as in parliaments, schools, universities, the question also is how are things done and why. Perhaps one day we could say on weapons as well, we know that weapons trade, we could see a sign on weapons saying this product can endanger your health for instance. So we need to introduce ethics into business. Perhaps over time then this could affect the way people do business, and we could see our work bear fruit there.

So I think these two ideas of a code of ethics and promoting partnership need to be considered. Now I'm coming to my conclusion. I think we need to see how we can develop this idea of partnership and code of ethics. This is the international year of volunteers. I think the fact that we've had such a year has been very helpful. I mean a lot of us are active in volunteering on an everyday basis, but this was one day to learn about projects and increase awareness. I think this is a good framework for communication. Perhaps I could suggest to Diana that we could pass on to the UN a suggestion of having a decade of volunteering instead of just a year of volunteers.

The Year of Peace of 2000 was changed into a decade for peace and as a result a plan of action was developed in order to be effective over this period. So perhaps we could dream that one day we might have a decade of volunteering so that we could further develop these ideas and these exchanges and these innovations.

A final point I wanted to make really goes back to what I said in the beginning: there are two questions that have been left open-ended and they were left open-ended because they were very complex and difficult. Perhaps we need to introduce the idea of monitoring the process on a permanent basis. We could create an observatory for volunteering. Such observatories are quite fashionable these days. We might want to have something like this for volunteering so that we can understand what the scope of volunteering is. Perhaps we could also create the position of somebody to act as the defender of volunteering so that we can really recognise the problems that volunteers are facing. These were just a couple of ideas I wanted to throw into the room. I think we could definitely look at these more concretely and we would need a concrete plan of action. We didn't really talk about globalisation today but I think volunteering is a form of positive globalisation. Globalisation is always treated very negatively because people feel manipulated by industry and business. But I think a culture of peace is perhaps the positive side of globalisation, we need to get volunteering involved in this. So that societies can become better and work towards human rights. I think one place where people really work in a culture of peace is in the voluntary sector. We need to have a culture of volunteering. This really gives a good idea of what we are trying to achieve and I don't think it's too far out of our reach.

Mme Agneta Derrien, Executive Director of EYC Strasbourg:

Actually the phrase 'encourage the volunteer culture' is a key idea we all share and is also a phrase that appears in the Recommendation adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The International Year we are celebrating is an expression of this. I think we are probably all somewhat sceptical about international years, but they are there and we should make the best use of them. In her introduction, Elisabeth mentioned the importance of the links between non-governmental organisations and governments. As a representative of the Council of Europe I can say that for the youth sector we are right in the middle of it. For those who might not know, the Council of Europe is a pan-European intergovernmental organisation. I think it's important to underline the word pan-European because it means that countries like Bulgaria and Azerbaijan are full members of the Council of Europe, so we have a very wide scope of co-operation.

The purpose of an intergovernmental organisation is to adopt norms and standards and legal instruments like Recommendations and Conventions. In the field that concerns you here, there is a Recommendation that the Committee of Ministers - which is the executive committee of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs – has adopted on voluntary service and there is also now a Convention since last year. A Convention has the advantage of being a legally binding instrument. There are benefits to that, although a Convention also needs to be ratified by member states in order to be operational, and that can be a hurdle. So far a sufficient number of countries have not ratified the convention.

The Convention's main objective is to provide what we are all looking for: a legal status for volunteers. I think that is an important measure. We all know that there is nothing exciting about

legal instruments, but they are important for you who are working and need to solve the visa problems. There are also definitions that have to be established and we need to try as best as possible to arrive at some form of harmonisation between the European countries. This morning the comment was made that there were problems with harmonisation between the member countries of the European Union. Of course, in the Council of Europe we also have member states from Central and Eastern Europe, so harmonisation is even more complex.

The Assembly Recommendation clearly states that the Convention should be ratified. The fact that it has to be ratified by the various Parliaments of the Member States is a strong point. The Recommendation also refers to the code of conduct with volunteer rights and responsibilities and the need for a European framework on this.

I, like the other members of the panel, am impressed to see how diverse the presentations have been, and of course as the day goes on we will see even more diversity. The diversity is not only in the types of projects but also – and this has sometimes created a bit of confusion, I think – in the origin of the project, meaning some were local, others international, multilateral. Whatever the case, they are all quite different and all require different treatments.

Now when it comes to the non-governmental sector of the Council of Europe, it falls in the category of multilateral activities, and we don't give any support to voluntary work exchange schemes. But the primary focus of the Council of Europe's work is to work with the non-governmental sector and I think that's where the activities convene. So the key words that have been mentioned this morning about participation, partnership, non-formal education, they are all there. I mean it's the way we see this. It's the philosophy we have in the Council of Europe to work like this. For us it's absolutely essential that there be real participation where young people can create their own projects and continue developing them.

I would now like to say a few words about financing. I have always considered it extremely important for the non-governmental sector to receive public financial support without any conditions attached. Obviously, you don't participate unless you have the financial resources to do so. I would also like to share Kim's view that it would be important for us who represent the institutions to see what your expectations are, what can we possibly continue to do in order to support you.

Pierre Mairesse:

When we talk about volunteering and all that that implies in terms of needs and aid, we think about the difficulties in organising projects and setting up voluntary schemes. When I listened to the four presentations, I was each time surprised by the message. We never heard about the



Ulvi Salayev (Youth Volunteer Management Unit, Azerbaijan), Pierre Mairesse (European Commission) and Agneta Derrien (Council of Europe) during the third "Roundtable".

difficulties at first. That wasn't the first message we got. We got the results, which are fantastic. That doesn't mean that there aren't any difficulties. I think we are at the beginning of a long road. We at the Commission are trying to eliminate the hurdles and help you young people, but also the non-governmental organisations, share in this experience of voluntary service, catch the virus and spread it.

There are three things I would like to tell you about. First of all there is a European programme. It's not only for Europeans but is world wide, and there are important activities for voluntary service. The Commission has made efforts to try and open up the programme, but I think we must remain humble. There is room for improvement. I think we can simplify things more and make a greater effort to give all young people access to the programme, because for some it is more difficult than for others. What is special about the Youth programme is that it *can* achieve this, but we too *must* play our part. The task is not an easy one, but we can work over a period of time and progressively open it up to all young people.

The second thing I wanted to say is slightly more political. We are trying to remove obstacles. I have already been asked when there is going to be a Directive obliging all States to simplify this and get rid of the visas and so on. We are still a long way away from that. We have begun with a Recommendation. However, it is very interesting and will be adopted at the end of the month by all the Member States who will adopt a recommendation that concerns them. That's good. Also,

along these same lines, they will be proposing with our help an Action Plan to promote mobility and remove the obstacles. Forty two actions is quite good and the most interesting thing is that they seem to be saying to themselves that in two years time they will see the progress made. We won't have done everything, and within two years time all the states of the European Union will take stock of the progress they've made. I'm optimistic to say quite a few obstacles will have been, if not removed, at least reduced.

My third point is even more political. Belgium, in this Year of Volunteers, is going to take over the EU Presidency in July, after Sweden. For the youth sector, the Belgians have decided to make voluntary work one of its priorities and will produce a document focusing on recognition, status, financing and a whole series of difficulties that we encounter with the EVS and voluntary service in general. So this is going to be one of the major themes of the Belgian Presidency. For us it's going to be a very important topic when we are preparing the White Paper, and by the end of the year we will have to make proposals in this area.

So there you have the three main areas of focus: a very practical one, the programme; a resolution from the Member States to remove obstacles; and a better taking into account of volunteering in political terms in the documents to be adopted by the end of the year. Thank you very much.

Karina Häuslemeier, President of AEGEE Europe:

I would like to address the question of equality. We were talking about the funding of certain projects of volunteers, but I didn't hear anything about the voluntary work in youth organisations. Here we have some major difficulties that we have to tackle, for example, in the European board of a student organisation we're still trying to find a solution to the visa problem for the students we want to come from Romania. We're having some difficulties financing voluntary work as well.

Arjen Bos:

My organisation was going to host an EVS volunteer from Bielorussia. The funding application was approved, but for the rest there was nothing. He couldn't get a visa. He couldn't get the time off from school, etc. So if you talk about what else needs to be done to support and promote volunteering, it's a lot more than just allocating money and creating funding opportunities. It's also about all other forms of political and policy support.

François Ribaud, Alliance:

This is a suggestion as to what the organisations could ask for. I am the treasurer of the Alliance of Voluntary Service Organisations. One form of support we might ask for is support in setting up projects. One of the major difficulties we have setting up projects is not always hosting people but finding structures that we can help to host volunteers. The administrative logic of the programmes often limits our access to hosting placements. I don't know how to officialise it in order to present it at the political level, but I think organisations do need to have general support in order to develop the project.

Alexander Hanel:

I just had two points I wanted to make. The first concerns the legal status of volunteer work in Bulgaria and the EVS and Youth programme in Bulgaria. In this International Year of Volunteers, Bulgaria is not included in the Youth programme, and it's the only country not included. I contacted the authorities in Sofia about this, to find out why and they said it wasn't their responsibility. So my question is perhaps if the Commission could take this point up and do something about it. We had two volunteers who wanted to come to Germany and this couldn't be organised. I think this is rather scandalous that in the IYV they could not be included in the programme.

My second point is about visas. In the beginning I was in fact illegally in Bulgaria because I couldn't get a visa. I had to go once to Romania, once to Turkey and once to Greece to keep up my tourist status. Fortunately, my problem has now been solved but only after a lot of red tape.

Elisabeth Hardt:

This highlights the fact that we still have a lot of issues to deal with. But we also have to know that the institutions don't always have the scope and power to change things as fast as we would like them to be changed.

Kim Svendsen:

I would like to thank all of you volunteers and panel members for all you've done to make this Convention come true. I think we have all gained a lot of inspiration for our future work, both as volunteers and as professionals. Thanks.

Closing Session with Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission

Henrik Söderman:

President Prodi, welcome to this Convention on volunteering which is being organised in the context of the International Year of Volunteers 2001. Today, young people from different parts of Europe have had the opportunity to present the projects they are involved in and the experiences and difficulties that they have encountered. This event is being organised by the European Youth Forum with the support of the Economic and Social Committee who kindly gave us the use of this building, with the help of the Bosh Foundation and the UN volunteers, and of course with the financial support of your services, the European Commission. The young people are eagerly waiting to hear you talk about the role of young people in building a European civil society, a topic which is very close to all of us.

Mr Prodi:

I'm really happy to be here with you, because the debate on Europe and the involvement of young people in the European institutions are not as deep as I thought. The general problem of engaging young people in political discussions is particularly evident at the European level. So, I'm very happy to talk to a group of people who devote part of their time here to discussing issues concerning society and not only themselves. I think that we should see more of this kind of involvement. It is so difficult for European policymakers to keep track of the concerns and wishes of young people. I think that we can involve ourselves in politics when we deal with the real big problems and are concerned about the future, and I have taken this problem seriously. This is the reason why we spend a lot of time consulting youth organisations and holding youth conferences and trying to talk with people like you who think about the future and try to live accordingly.

Of course, I know that you are concerned about the end result of this type of discussion. Later this year in the White Paper, we will try to announce what we intend to do and try to come up with a picture of how to take on board the concerns of young people, how to improve their life in Europe. That is always a difficult job, because young is not a general category. It's a state of mind too. I hope that the work we have done will be satisfying. But I can say that I see that White Paper as an opportunity to start the debate, not end it. So, I ask that you criticise it, say that you like it or dislike it, because what I don't like is indifference. The enemy of progress and politics is not opposition, it's indifference. So, what I am asking you to do is react.

The second message I wanted to convey to you is the need to define the kind of Europe we want for the future. When you stop to think about it, we have a lot of difficulty determining what young people expect from Europe. Earlier, I was thinking about this meeting and contemplating the situation 100 years ago. Really much of what people wanted then has been achieved: to have peace, to avoid the tragedy of the past. I was born in 1939 and was twenty years old in 1959 when Europe was just beginning. But the war was still fresh in our minds and visible in our cities. It was around us. My idea was peace, the end of the tragedy and economic development. I studied economics. We have accomplished much of that, and yet we are still unhappy if not even more so. So I would like to understand what you expect from Europe, because I think that in certain respects, the Europe I see is

not that much different from the one a century ago. Peace now is still in my mind and I hope in yours too, and peace now is enlargement and the unification of Europe.

Europe in the beginning had to deal with the aftermath of the war, and now our attention is focused on the consequences of the collapse of the Berlin wall. Nowadays, when I listen to the discussions, enlargement is only seen in terms of money. I'm worried, because of course money is part of it. But we're also talking about peace, which is at stake. I'm really surprised that many of those who talk about the tragedy of the Balkans, who see that outside our borders there are still tragedies, civil and 'normal' wars, they don't think that enlargement is another big step forward to make us safer.



Romano Prodi and Henrik Söderman

World War. Of course, I think that Europe and the US must be linked together. Peace in the world is contingent on strong co-operation between the US and Europe. In this sense I have really always been pro-American. But I also know that we must regain the will to win, to believe in science and in a renewal of society. It's not enough to have science, German, French or British or Italian science. It's not enough to have French, Italian, British or German intellectuals. The new intellectual work of Europe is what we have to do, because we have a tradition that is different from the US. We have a tradition of welfare and solidarity. We have institutions that have been handed down to us from the Middle Ages, from earlier centuries. Our societies have evolved out of these.

So my vision of Europe is very much linked to a commitment of sharing in science, to development, innovation and solidarity, and this is why I am really very interested in what you are doing. Youth, civil society and non-governmental organisations are all necessary in building this new European melting pot, which is completely different from the American one because we preserve our language, our nations, our identity. But we are combining our energy to be leaders again, for peace and leadership. This is why we are trying to build up this institution. Of course, the Commission is not a gift of God. It's not by definition the best, but we are trying to represent in some sense this synergy, this expression of different nations who work together. It is an institution that is taking care of the general interest of Europe and not the interest of one country alone.

Faithful to the definition of Europe, I have learned in my experience here that the best definition is a Europe different from any other institution ever created in the world. The first reason is because of the

But I also see Europe from another point of view, and I know it is important for young people. The European Union is a way of returning Europe to the leading role it always had. But the role that we lost, we began to lose with the First World War and we continued to lose with the Second

democratic process. I was attending a seminar in Lithuania a few months ago at a university, and the general atmosphere was strongly for Europe. But there was a group of very intelligent students who were against it, and one of the reasons was they were fed up with the Union. We already had the Soviet Union, so why should we want the European Union, was what they said. So I said, okay, maybe you're right. But just tell me, when was it that you applied to be in the Soviet Union, for that is the real difference. We're trying to build this enormous fantastic new reality through democracy. There is a methodology that is completely different from any other. Then I said, we preserve nationality, we preserve the roots. But we must build institutions where none of the nationalities can be dominant.

The best definition I received of Europe is a Union of minorities. And that's precisely what it is. This is the delicate effort of building this fantastic reality in which there is no dominating nation. But the strength comes from the collective effort and the Commission, the Parliament, the ESC, the European institutions are trying to express this new reality. It is an effort that will go on for many years. We needed 45 years to build Europe, so I'm not frightened about the idea that this process will be a long one. But this is something new in the world. There is nothing like the European institutions. When I met Kofi Annan he told me to pursue the effort, telling me simply 'look, there is nothing new in the world, except the European Union', there is no new endeavour or new effort, no imagination. All the new events are imitating you. If you consider Mercosur, if you consider ASEAN, if you consider the Bush proposal for the Americans, they are really based on the first moves by the European Union. I think that if we are able to be in the forefront of politics in the institutions, in the forefront of science, probably we will be happy being policymakers. We will be happy working like you are in NGOs, trying to have this intelligent framework. There are some aims that are very important for which it's worthwhile to live and to work.

Henrik Söderman:

Thank you very much for your inspiring words. I think we have clearly received the messages that you wanted to pass on to us. What you said about us as young people having to play our role is, I think, a great challenge. But I'd like to think that what you said will be of consequence, because if you tell us young people to assume our role building Europe by assuming our role in society it's for a good reason. There is the risk that we will actually do that. Now I will open the floor.

Elisabeth Hardt:

I'm the Secretary General of the European Federation for Intercultural Learning which groups together the AFS-interkultura youth exchange organisations. I'm also a Member of the Board of the Association of Voluntary Service Organisations which co-organises this event. Today, I'd like to address two things that are dear to your heart, which is collaboration with civil society, the third sector in Europe, and the reforms of the Institutions. You have quite a large number of directorates at the Commission working very closely with the NGO sector, the most obvious one being DG Development. There is also your longstanding support to the liaison Committee (CLONG), the hugely successful PHARE programme with LIEN, all of these programmes that developed networks between Western and Eastern European NGOs. A few years back, there was a study on the role of associations in Europe. Now there is a DG XII study on investigating the notion of social enterprise and of course the programme that the people

in this room work most with, which would be European Voluntary Service and all the support measures surrounding voluntary service.

I also wonder if it would not benefit the whole civil society sector in Europe to have more inter-directorate collaboration inside the Commission or work with the sector. Depending on which action you address, the rules of collaboration between the Commission and the NGOs differ. I think it would be worthwhile if the Commission were aware of the scope of collaboration that is already taking place and what it can do to support the efforts of civil society.

Ivana Vukov:

I'm from AEGEE, the European Students Forum. Well, you said: 'Did anybody ever ask one of the Soviet republics whether they applied to join the Soviet Union?' I'm from Croatia, which is a small country, and I fully understand why a country like mine would want to join the European Union. But I get the impression that small countries not yet Members of the European Union are more and more motivated to join, because otherwise they would be alone and unable to make it on their own. So maybe the European Union, now that it has become a powerful and strong mechanism, is also imposing itself on countries. So it's not so much a matter of choice any more.

Arjen Bos:

I have a pretty straightforward question. Mr Prodi, you are quite busy at the moment but at a certain point in time, your term with the Commission will be over. I was wondering if you would consider doing some kind of volunteer work to contribute to European civic society.

Giacomo Filibeck:

I'm a Bureau member of the European Youth Forum. If Henrik felt inspired, I feel great because we've never had the opportunity to be face to face with the Head of the European Commission. At least we are encouraging the Commission to repeat such an opportunity again, because it gives us the possibility first of all to understand that we are all human beings and second of all it seems like we understand each other pretty well. When I say that I feel great, it's because I see in the words of President Prodi the full understanding of what we, as youth organisations are doing in Europe. When it's about constructing intellectually, politically, socially, this Europe, then we can easily claim to be the ones who are contributing willingly to the construction of Europe. Mention was made of the White Paper and the White Paper process. It is precisely here that you see this in the wide and broad consultation that Viviane Reding has been engaged in as the Commissioner for Youth and Culture. She has been travelling all over Europe the past year and a half, and we have been in the front line politically and intellectually helping to make this White Paper. And then you see that we feel very committed when it comes to giving ideas and expressing our position. So here you really find fertile ground ready to receive all the input and provide feedback afterwards.

When you ask us what kind of Europe you want, the vision of Europe you have, it would now be wonderful to initiate a dialogue with you on this. But I suppose that we don't have time to listen to each and every different vision. It's clear that we have our vision and what we want is a Europe of justice, a

transparent Europe. We want a Europe that is transparent to its citizens, a Europe that accepts criticism and allows its citizens to fully participate in the process of constructing it, encouraging them to participate and creating forums where civil society can be consulted.

You mentioned the indifference and well it's true there is a large segment of young people like that. We have to recognize this, because we represent organised youth here, young people fully committed to work, young people who want to participate. But there are young people who feel completely indifferent towards issues like the European Union. And indifference is clearly one of the worst enemies to combat. Whereas you can always deal with ignorance through education, it is extremely difficult to fight indifference among people. But helping the already existing structure can facilitate the process of combating indifference. Helping the already existing structure to involve more and more young people is definitely a way of developing a broader perspective when it comes to young people's involvement. So we want an enlarged Europe, a Europe of full employment, a secure Europe, a Europe of human rights, a Europe of civil, political and economic social rights. The Europe that we want is clearly not easy to build, but I repeat we are fully committed to working in that direction.

And that's why I have to express my full appreciation of your words when it comes to your commitment to the publishing of the White Paper. For us it means that this Commission is definitely moving in this direction, creating new spaces, new fields of action that did not exist before. This is brave on your part. It shows a lot of commitment when it comes to understanding young people's demands and for that we simply thank you and we promise that we will keep our commitment as high as yours.

Romano Prodi:

First of all, on the question of volunteering after I retire, well I entered politics very late in life. It was only recently that I became a politician in 1995. Before that I worked a lot for what you call civil society, especially in the cultural field. But it was strange because when I was a student I did that. Then when I began my career at university, I dropped it. When I became a professor, I resumed that activity. Since I became a politician, I have again dropped it. So I can say that I was very faithful to the commitment. It was only in the most difficult period of my life that I was not engaged. So I cannot tell you what will happen after the end of my term in office, but certainly I hope to have the courage to follow your advice. I think this is the correct answer. I won't commit myself anymore than that. I think that the real democratic society is when you have a lot of people who engage in these horizontal links.

Second of all, about Croatia and the problem of the small states who want to enter, it's a difficult problem, especially for countries who are not yet among the twelve, who are in some sort of limbo. And it's very difficult because of course when you changed the government, I flew to Croatia immediately a week later just to convey the message: the doors of Europe are open, nothing more. Then you started the difficult process of agreements and then negotiations and then accession, and I know that people find it exasperating to go from party to pros. It's something that's almost incomprehensible. But it's the same kind of problem I find myself faced with now. The applicant countries want to come in immediately and the Member States are more and more cautious. And my role in this is – because this is a democratic process – to make public opinion feel comfortable in the member countries and the new countries. And so this process is a continuous one of expanding our

links without losing this trust. I know that it is very prosaic, especially for Croatia, a country that I know well and that I love. I am familiar with it in many aspects. But I understand that you are in some respects a victim of history, and it's completely unjustified to be victims of the past. So I hope the process can be speeded up. I'll do my best but at the moment the debate is so focused on the first wave of accession countries that it's not easy to accelerate it. But we are working on that. For Croatia, my opinion will be easy because of Europe's open traditions and because I think that the resources and population will permit rapid development in the future. So I'm very confident even though I realise that it's a hard time at the moment. Whatever the case, I think the process will come about.

Now with regard to co-operation with civil society, to put it in general terms. You know you were right on target when you said that co-operation between European Institutions and civil society has been narrowly focused on certain aspects and has been compartmentalized. You are right and it's not easy to change even if there are big changes with the greater involvement in foreign policy. It's not only development but it's also this big commitment to promoting democracy, elections and institutions. This is really a tremendous commitment to civil society but it's not easy, even if it must be done in other fields like agriculture.

But at the end of the day, the change that is now urgent in agricultural policy has to do with your request. Because of history and a shortage of food in Europe, we developed a policy that was only market-oriented and it worked. It worked well but after a while we realised that we were out of touch with the changes in civil society. And I think we learned our lesson and realised that we had to build the food protection authority. All these parallel agencies are really aimed at balancing the situation and setting right the decisions from our earlier days. I think that your advise, your request must be heeded in many sectors. But I also think that it is helped by events, many times by bad events like BSE or foot-and-mouth disease. These crises open our eyes to realities and force us to adopt a new mentality. I hope we can learn to be more pro-active and not wait until bad events occur before we change our way of thinking. That's what I would like to see, and I think that there is a whole number of fields where this co-operation is needed and is useful. Of course, there is one problem, the problem of how we go about organising the expression of civil society. Sometimes I find myself in a very difficult situation where I have to deal with an NGO that is not very transparent. So while I have to change our institution, I also need to work with transparent NGOs, which have democratic processes and democratic rules. Otherwise, it poses a problem for me. Sometimes, I don't understand the rules or how they operate. This is something that will have to be dealt with soon if we are to avoid some major problems in the future. There are too many cases where I am uncomfortable, because I don't understand what the rules are of these so-called representatives of civil society I have in front of me.

With regard to the White Paper, I am not familiar with the content of it yet. I will read it and follow its progress, and I will commit myself to discussing it with you at some point. I will try at such time to build on our partnership, because as I said earlier a policy for youth is difficult because it must attempt to take account of all changes, new developments and new generations of young people. But this must remain a time for discussion. I hope and I will insist that it cover all the controversial points, because I don't see the White Paper as an instrument of action at this stage. Well, there must be some points where it can be an instrument of action, but at this early point in time it must be above all an instrument of discussion.

Henrik Söderman:

Thank you, President Prodi. I think we have all appreciated your presence here today. For us, your presence here has been a clear signal of your political support for and recognition of the work that youth organisations across Europe do every day. As you have heard, we are really looking forward to the White Paper, and we have also heard from you clear support for the White Paper. We are sure that you will also be promoting the debate on youth policy inside the Commission, because we believe it very important for this debate to take place between the different services in the Commission. What's more, I'm sure we will take you up on your promise to come back and discuss this with us. We will consult with your services to find a proper time to do this. So thank you very much.