

European Activities to Strengthen Youth (E.A.S.Y.)



E.A.S.Y. Booklet Series Vol. 1

Deluxe Edition • Starter Conference Mühltal/Germany • 25.02.-02.03.2007

Mission accomplished - The complete Report







E.A.S.Y. - The Booklet Series

Welcome to the first volume of the E.A.S.Y. Booklet Series. The series documents the process and outcomes of E.A.S.Y., a large scale European project* which lasted from 2006 to 2008. E.A.S.Y. stands for: "European Activities to Strengthen Youth" and was realized within the framework of the Youth in Action Programme operated by the European Commission, E.A.S.Y. dealt with innovative approaches in European youth work with special focus on the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities into activities starting from the local and aiming up to an European level of mobility and exchange - a level that often seems to be .completely out of reach' for the target group in question: "Europe? That's something ,inaccessible', a, mystery', maybe for the others, but not for me!" ... really? We were not sure about it, but motivated to find literally easy ways to extend the chances of participation of young people with fewer opportunities. First of all in so called Local Attractor Projects, but also on the occasion of international meetings and during training activities where good practice experiences and knowledge could be exchanged and methodologies of involvement and participation could be elaborated.

The so called V.I.P. approach was in the center of all activities: young people do certainly have the biggest competence to deal with their own affairs, and when it comes to youth work it is probably them who know best what the role of the so called "professionals" should be in order to facilitate the achievement of their goals. The project was run by a network of six partner organisations from Germany (Network ROPE), Italy (GIOSEF UNITO), Lithuania (Youth Exchange Agency), Poland (SZANSA), Spain (Inter Europa), and the UK (TribesNETribes). The Centre of Excellence (CoEx), established from the (local) project coordinators and young V.I.P.s, was in charge of projectmanagement, documentation and public relations. We hope you will enjoy reading our first booklet (and the others as well)!



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The Conference Diary

A day-to-day record of the Starter Conference

Sunday, 25th of February 2007

Partcipants arrive throughout the day at the conference centre in Mühltal/Germany. The evening gives a first opportunity for meeting and chatting by the fireside. A little creative work is done (building a "personal letter box"), snacks and drinks are offered - seems to be a nice bunch of people!!!

Monday, 26th of February 2007 The morning starts with some little name and getting to know each other activities. Sven has the honour to officially open the conference, and to give an overview of the whole conference-programme. He then gives an input on the original project idea, how it developped over some years, and how it finally ended up (or better: to start on a much bigger level anew) in the E.A.S.Y. project. Special attention is paid to the "V.I.P. approach" that is one of the central ideas within E.A.S.Y. After lunch there is the time and space for the partners to give a little taste of what they do in their local realities, to present their project work, and also to sum up for the others what they have already done to prepare the E.A.S.Y. project on local level. The evening is dedicated to local culture: the group takes a guided walk through downtown and meets the "Heiner", the "Berserker", and finally the "tower of sausages" in Grohe restaurant. I think it was Julián who ate the most Brat-, Leber-, Fleischwürste. Schnitzel, Bratkartoffeln and Sauerkraut!



Tuesday, 27th of February 2007

The whole working day is dedicated to review the E.A.S.Y. work plan: Paul and Sven have hung up a gigantic 7 meter barchart in the conference room to make the project flow more visible. The total budget of the project is visualized, too. A lot of questions and talking - in the end of the morning, everybody seems to have a better understanding of the whole structure, mission accomplished. The afternoon sees smaller working groups: one group deals with the next big E.A.S.Y. event: the V.I.P.-Training in Bonn, trying to define contents and





recommendations for the programme. Another group works on the role of the Centre of Excellence (CoEx), and another one, run by V.I.P.s only, works out ideas for local projects and some elements that would be important for the international activities as well.

Wednesday, 28th of February 2007

Dariusz Grzemny (Darek) introduces us to a special software named "Moodle". originally designed for E-learning. In pairs we spend the morning in front of computers connected to the Internet and trying out all the fantastic features that this communication tool offers. We decide that this open source software is more appropriate for working together than the Teamspace-software that we had used so far, not only because it's not as dear as Teamspace, but also because it is comparatively easy to handle and offers a lot more possibilities! It is defined as one of the tasks of the Centre of Excellence to set up Moodle on a webserver, to costumise it for the E.A.S.Y. project, and to use it from now on. In the afternoon Hendrik Otten and Annette Mütter from IKAB e.V. deliver a little workshop on "Evaluation"; they explain the overall idea of evaluating a large-scale project and hand out a questionnaire for self-evaluation to the V.I.P.s present in the conference. Easy and Rachid, local V.I.P.s from Darmstadt are there as well, this afternoon, to take part in the workshop. The V.I.P.s find it reasonable and practical to work with the self-evaluation tool developped by IKAB, Hendrik and Annette will also be helping with the preparation of the first V.I.P.-Training Course. Unfortunately they have to leave in the afternoon and miss the Salsa-lessons that we attend this evening at 603gm, a student's place, kind of bar and dance -hall at one time (see our V.I.P. Paul's report on that very special event on pages 14 to 15).

Thursday, 1st of March 2007

We spend the morning in Kranichstein, the so called "social hot spot"-area of Darmstadt. The "walk through the ghetto", as it is announced a little bit provocatively in the programme, takes us to a meeting of local youth workers, school-representatives, the police, and other important actors of Kranichstein. We exchange on youth work structures in the different countries represented

and get a cup of coffee. Another cup we get later at the Ökumenisches Kinder- und Jugendhaus, one of the three youth centres in Kranichstein. Easy, Rachid and Alex, three V.I.P.s from Kranichstein, talk about the work they are doing, and especially about how they manage to deal with so called "difficult" youngsters. Mr. Jochen Partsch and Mr. Ingo Koch, representatives of the Science City of Darmstadt's Youth and Social Department take us to Sharks' Gym, another kind of - youth centre where young people can do some sports, especially martial arts, and/or use the facilities of a fitnessclub autonomously. The group is invited to have lunch at the Erich Kästner-School's mensa, just like the kids do! In the afternoon Andreas Eisenhauer, accountant of ROPE, explains in detail the terms and conditions of accounting within the E.A.S.Y. project. He starts his speech with the basic rule for all projects that are funded by the European Union: "No bill, no money!" A more detailled financial plan is worked out together that will be the basis for each partner organisation to manage the local budgets and the budget for international activities. The evening starts with a nice little birthday-party for Sven who has the pleasure to receive beautiful presents from the group including massage-balls and a portrait made by Scottish V.I.P. Eilidh.

Traditional German, Kindergeburtstags"-games are played such as Eierlaufen (walking the egg), Topfschlagen (hitting the pot), and Wahrheit oder Pflicht (truth or dare).

Later on the party is continued in the local discothèque, but only a few can get back by car, some have to walk – and loose their way ...

Friday, 2nd of March 2007

Fortunately in the morning everybody is back to say goodbye and "see you in Bonn!"

authors: Paul Czekalla & Sven Rasch photos: Roxana Meechan & Christoph Klinger





Food for Thought

Who are the real youth workers? How can so called "difficult" young people get involved in local and international projects? Some ideas on the V.I.P. approach

Who has got the key to the inside world of so called "difficult" or "disadvantaged" young people?

Who can estimate various cultural and social behaviour patterns at the best?

Who knows the royal road to enter their way of thinking and acting?

In our opinion these are "life-experienced" young people who have been grown up under similar conditions as the target group mentioned before!

They can be "Very Important Persons" (V.I.P.s) who are able to understand and to use the communication patterns and skills corresponding to the target group which should be reached.

In this concept the V.I.P.s are strategic partners of disadvantaged youngsters. The relationship is based on natural grown respect. Disadvantaged young people can accept V.I.P.s as consultants, because the V.I.P.s accept young peoples' tendency to keep autonomy.

Related autonomy in this sense could be seen as an important tool for young people to create (self-)responsibility and taking consequences in their lifes.

Professional youth workers in this framework have to promote the process between young people and V.I.P.s.

Furthermore they are organisers, facilitators, supervisors and translators to politicians.

V.I.P.s are excellent transmitters in this innovative and future oriented "close to client"-concept.

We think, in the original meaning of the word, they are the real youth workers!!!

author: Andreas Krauß photo: Christoph Klinger

Active - Practical - Dynamic

Results of the working group session on V.I.P.-Training Course design

The session was held on Wednesday, 28th of February.
The task of the V.I.P.-Training Course design working group was to come up with ideas on the content of the first V.I.P.-Training Course to be held in Bonn/Germany (20.-29.07.2007), and to give recommendations on how to ensure good quality.

Below the results that were reported to the plenary:

CONTENT

project planning and project management (from initial idea to evaluation)

- from general to concrete
- step by step
- simulation
- enough time to plan local
projects
proper team building

(getting to know partners and build trust) ice breakers working on motivation

how to approach: difficult or critical situations,

conflict how to build relations working on communication skills intercultural skills

(communication, exploring stereotypes, and prejudices)

information on the project and the context

(Youth in Action)

enough time for sharing
(getting to know local context,
target groups)
principles of peer learning &
techniques of peer education
getting in contact with local youth
(visit to a youth centre, examples
of practice)
social activities

(each evening is a country evening)

planning cooperation and communication:
between groups

free time

RECOMMENDATIONS
active – practical – dynamic
involving youth/social workers

(as resource persons)

checking local groups' training needs

(before the course)

energise and motivate V.I.P.s for action provide concrete material to participants

(to be taken home) prep.-meeting

(well enough before the TC) external resource persons

facilitation: Dariusz Grzemny photo: Christoph Klinger

The presentation of the working group results can also be seen on our webpage: easy-easy.eu (Video-Gallery!)





Local Attractor Projects

Results of a plenary discussion on Wednesday, 28th of February

"What is an Attractor Project?"

The question was raised by Andreas Krauß and followed by a vivid and controversial discussion on the systemic metaphor of "attractors" and the profile of V.I.P.s who are supposed to be running local projects.

An "onion-model" of disadvantages was developped and later on abandonned...

THESES:

 to start attractive processes you need to have good relations with the other "system"

- it's a bottom-up strategy

 we as adults do not reach several groups of "disadvantaged" youngsters (anymore)

 peers do have contacts with these groups, they have insider-knowledge and maybe come from the same background

 V.I.P.s may have an advantage as they are disadvantaged, too

DISCUSSION:

Do young people necessarily have to be "disadvantaged" to be a V.I.P. in the E.A.S.Y. project?

What can be the role of "less disadvantaged" people?

How do we define "disadvantaged"? One way to describe it could be an onion-model of different types of V.I.P.s: There's the core of the onion representing very obviously "disadvantaged" people and there is some layers representing less and less disadvantages up to "no disadvantage at all"

Through the discussion and with a lot of examples for different kinds of disadvantages the group discovered that there is nothing like a common definition for a proper' or really' disadvantaged V.I.P.!

Instead it is the young people themselves who discover certain needs in their lifes, and who communicate their need for support to bring about a change. A young person with no, classical' (or at first hand visible) disadvantage at all, but having a good relationship with peers from an obviously disadvantaged group,

may well become a V.I.P. in the project! There is no need to limit the potential of (wo)manpower to a close definition of a "disadvantaged V.I.P."!

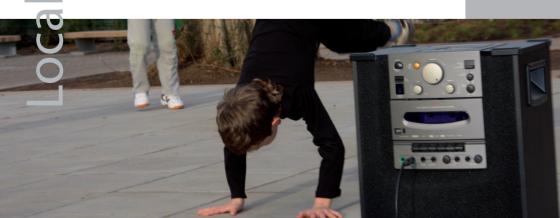
Still what makes a V.I.P. special and important to the project is his/her capacity of direct communication: He/She does have a ,privileged' way to approach other young people, he/he speaks a language that can be understood by his/her peers easily!

Instead of speaking about "disadvantages" that are always linked to a certain context (and if the context changes, a disadvantage may easily become an advantage), it might be more appropriate to talk about opportunities: less and better opportunities, about one reality that can be changed for another reality. This process of constant change, flexibility, tolerance and reflexion is basically interesting and important for those who consider themselves (or who are considered to be) disadvantaged and for those who feel themselves (or a are held to be) advantaged or privileged. It is a mutual learning process, an exchange of one group with the other, with some taking over more (and more) responsibility!

There can be different kinds of motivation for a young person to become a V.I.P.: In the case of voung people with better opportunities it might be just curiosity, the will to get out of a very protected environment, or to learn about survival-strategies of peers who do have to get along with harder conditions; on the side of young people with less opportunities it might be only curiosity as well, might be the will to bring about a change for the better for him-/herself and maybe the whole group of peers, might be the challenge just to try out something new... again this can not be defined beforehand, but it is to be found out in the local realities where the tension between less and better opportunities are felt.

If young people with an advantage and others with a disadvantage, or better young people with fewer and young people with better opportunities are working together there should be in any case an atmosphere of trust; help' should be considered something, natural' something no one – be he/she from the one or the other group – should be afraid of!

facilitation: Andreas Krauß photo: Christoph Klinger





LAP Short Description Pattern

In order to ease the coordination of the different Local Attractor Projects (LAPs) the partners obliged themselves to compile a short description of ongoing or planned LAPs. Below the pattern that has been used for this description

CONTENT

- Title (short summary)
- Profile of Target Group:
- age
- gender
- background
- number
- Type of Activities
- Local Partners
- Resources/Facilities
- project team (describing also the specific role of V.I.P.s)
- location
- equipment
- budget
- European Dimension
- Time-Schedule

LENGTH

— Minimum one Page

DEADLINE

- 15th of June 2007

photo: Christoph Klinger

Centre of Excellence (CoEx)

Outcomes from a working group that thought about its role within the project on Wednesday, 28th of February

The session was about figuring out more precisely what the role and task of the Centre of Excellence (CoEx) should be within the E.A.S.Y. project.

Centre of Excellence should first describe and communicate "where we are" at the moment, then follow the whole process of the project from the local to the international level to show "where we want to go", and finally sum up and communicate "where we have finally arrived to"!

Work starts from sharing and collecting (best) experiences and practices (methods used, sample projects). How do we do it or how have we done it (best) in the past, especially when it comes to communicating with and including ("difficult") young people?

CoEx then should create and devise methods, models and even methodologies on improved communication with young people, and spread this information Europe-wide.

In a warm-up phase the group also discussed on special needs and "disadvantages" young people do face in the local realities of the partner countries:

Scotland remoteness (geographical: from town to town, and especially to the, heart' of Europe), isolation (physical and social), lack of facilities, lack of opportunities (jobs, trades, apprenticeships, colleges, universities), lack of housing, underachievement, undermotivation/apathy, alcohol/drugs/crime (sensitive or in danger of), young carers, special needs (mental, physical), suffering from abuse.

Many of the categories mentioned for the example of Scotland were also true for the other partners who additionally mentioned:

Spain low education, immigrants...

Lithuania school dropouts, orphans...

Germany educational failure, psychological problems, lack of motivation, drugs, unstable family situation...

Poland young people are vulnerable to violent (right-wing) ideologies, lack of self-confidence, vulnerable to extremism...





The group finally defined some core activities of the Centre of Excellence:

- Quality development
- Collection of best practices (each partner delivers one)
- Development of new methods/methodology
- Research (what is existing already/case studies)
- Consultation
- Finding common working definitions
- Securing easy communication (E.A.S.Y.-glossary)
- Coordination and organisation
- Reporting
- Promotion of V.I.P.-Pool (local and international level)
- Controlling (budget for all partners)
- Working directly with V.I.P.s

facilitation: Sven Rasch documentation: Paul Czekalla photo: Christoph Klinger

How I felt dancing Salsa and Merengue

An interview with V.I.P. Paul Czekalla who took part in a very special leisure-time activity on Wednesday, 28th of February

E.A.S.Y. Booklets: Hello Paul, you have been one of the very important young people in the E.A.S.Y. Starter Conference – how did it feel to be a V.I.P.?

Paul: It was a big honour for me to work on this project, I felt fine!

E.A.S.Y. Booklets: Paul, in this first volume of the E.A.S.Y. Booklet Series we are presenting a little bit of a documentation of the E.A.S.Y. Starter Conference: There is for instance a conference diary that shall remind people of what has happened in Mühltal, there is some photography, summaries of workshop-sessions etc. ... what is still missing is a more detailled insight of the so called informal part of the pogramme. We're pretty much interested in that, though. Could you please tell us, what the conference was like when no offical things we're going on?

Paul: Our programme beside the official part was very cool. We did a lot of different things in whole Darmstadt! After a short but

inciting sightseeing-tour on monday we went to Grohebrewery having one or the other beer, and eating some plates of pure meat! It was a very slack and funny evening. On wednesday we went out for a legendary Salsa class at the student's club 603am. Thursday was great, too: We started the evening with a terrific children's birthday party for Sven. We were dancing a lot and got to learn some medieval menuett-dance. To familiarize our European friends a little bit more with German cultural heritage we also played some typical games at the party like "Topfschlagen" and "Eierlaufen". Later that night we went to Steinbruchtheater, a verv old fashioned but most likeable discothèque with more dancing! It was a very special moment for me when they played one piece of my favourite band, the Arctic Monkeys. Alltogether the leisure -time activities were quite diverse and that was really the cool thing about it!

E.A.S.Y. Booklets: That sounds interesting, Paul. One thing seemed to be very particular: You all attended a Salsa-course?!?! How come, dude? What was it like? And how did you feel dancing Salsa? I know you're not so much a dancer, usually!





Paul: One evening we were in the city and thought 'bout things we could do to have some nice time. Then Sven told us, that he heard, that in the student's club 603gm this evening a Salsa dancing class for beginners would take place. So we decided to go there and we would not have to regret this: It was quite nice because most of us were real amateurs and we were frightened 'bout what would be happening. But the teacher started with really simple steps so all of us could dance at least a little Salsa in the end. But the degree of difficulty was raised quickly by the teacher and so more and more people from our group had to finally quit the dancefloor to just watch the scene. But a few courageous hearts danced 'til the very end with a fantastic finish, and Chiara from Italy even became a teaching instructor herself that night!

E.A.S.Y. Booklets: You mean, she became a Salsa-teacher right off?

Paul: Eso es! The maestro was looking for some girl from the class to help him show some tricky figures, and Chiara did not hesitate to jump on the stage. I don't know if she had danced Salsa before. But for sure she has a talent for dancing and understood all of the teacher's instructions easily, though not speaking any German. That girl is absolutely V.I.P., dude!

E.A.S.Y. Booklets: Paul, second but last question: If you were in charge to organise the next E.A.S.Y. conference, which parts of the informal programme would you keep and which parts would you just skip?

Paul: I would just skip all the official stuff and start the informal part after breakfast!! Haha, just kidding! Wouldn't skip any of the parts because all were themselves very special and funny of course!

E.A.S.Y. Booklets: And the last one is: Will you do the Salsa again?

Paul: For sure!

E.A.S.Y. Booklets: Thank you for this interview, Paul!

Paul: Thank you for having interviewed me!

interview: Sven Rasch photos: Christoph Klinger

Explanatory Notes on project accompanying Evaluation

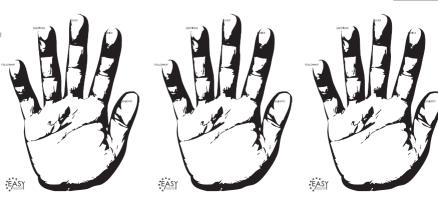
in due consideration of the "V.I.P.-method" as an integrated working principle of the project general statements

1.) What is true for the overall goal of the E.A.S.Y. project is also true for all its activities and action phases and so it is also for evaluation design: a preferably high degree of active participation of young people that should be "easy" to reach. For evaluation within the project we put it like this: "control of project-success by the youth itself".

2.) Decission for formative evaluation meets the innovative character of the project as it allows for all stakeholders to take well-founded corrective. modificatory, or ameliorative action in the process of the project. This is particularly true for the main phases of the project: local projects (attractor projects and their European dimension), European trainings (for V.I.P.s and social or vouth workers), and the V.I.P.-method as such, whereupon not only the process itself (development of the stakeholders) is a subject matter to evaluation but also the

different aims of the project with regards to content (educational objectives in terms of advanced options for action based on different/new perceptions, insights, and knowledge etc.).

- 3.) A final evaluation (summative) of the project then consists of feasible, intersubjectively comprehensible conclusions deduced from this project accompanying evaluation that is mainly based on self-evaluation in accordance with the V.I.P.method. The final evaluation together with added "external" data shall also allow for testimony of efficiency of the V.I.P.methodology and cost-benefit ratio of the E.A.S.Y. project. On this basis it is also possible to issue a qualified biographicalrelevant certificate.
- 4.) The "Centre of Excellence" has a significant role for evaluation design as it is in charge of quality management and quality control in the run of the project. It performs the following tasks: coordination, monitoring, resource management and employment of resources, administrative assurance of the complete project-cycle, documentation and dissemination of intermediate and final results.





For this purpose according to the project's concept they need to have certain service- and key-competences at their disposal. Progress of these competences in the trainings therefore has to be evaluated very exactly and promptly. In order to be able to generate

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E.A.S.Y. Booklet Series Vol. 2

V.I.P.-Training Course - Bonn/Germany 20.-29.07.2007 Midterm Conference &

V.I.P.-Training Course - Logroño/Spain 20.-28.03.2008 Final Conference - Berlin/Germany

10.-14.12.2008

F.A.S.Y. Booklet Series Vol. 3

Głogow Living Library 2008 **European Youth Summit 2008** Two more Local Attractor Projects 2008 Ten Tips to work with Young People

E.A.S.Y. Booklet Series Vol. 4

E.A.S.Y. Methodology revisited: The V.I.P. Approach (evaluated) Participatory Needs Analysis

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