



Cooperation between "EuroMed" and the Polish National Agency

It must sound funny to say that this relation started just before it was suspended! The enlargement of the European Union brought into this cooperation eight new countries full of enthusiastic young people and youth workers but also new National Agencies staff – I belong to the last group.

... Magreb... Mashrek?

Until the "EuroMed Meeting" in Lisbon in late 2003 (when project officers of National Agencies and, at that time, National Coordinators met) Euromed was for me a label, I knew it existed and with a jealous eye I looked at all those who were in. My knowledge about this cooperation was gently speaking "insufficient", I knew geography, more than average about cultures and history – but still I felt this was not really much when it comes to international cooperation between so different regions (or countries in particular).

From that moment onwards, Meda countries were no longer only destinations for tourism and I realised that stereotypes were not enough to understand and to work in this field. It was time to broaden my knowledge starting with being able to know the difference between Magreb and Mashrek countries.....

Since that time many things changed: some colleagues are not longer working in NAs, there are changes on the 'Meda' side due to decentralisation process, and there are new institutional actors in the field.

How to deal with priority?

At the beginning, Euromed was merely a question mark for the Polish NA. This region, or regions are quite far from us, there are any or very weak historical and cultural links. And just behind Eastern border of Poland there is another region, being a part of international cooperation within the Youth Programme – Eastern Europe and Caucasus. This region was and still is the highest priority for Polish National



National Agencies staff meeting, Lisbon 2003

Agency in our work. After discussions we decided that EuroMed cooperation, even not being the priority, should be open for our young people and Poland should be open for youth from Meda countries. This is how we see the role of Polish National Agency which stands for strengthening youth cooperation between EU and non Member States, increasing mutual understanding and equal treatment of all partners. Coming from this perspective we were trying to find a way to promote and offer opportunities for youth organisations willing to work in Euromed. But the first obstacle was "us" in the National Agency, not really experienced in this field. To better understand the reality of our partners we hosted in January 2004 the National Coordinator from Jordan (job shadowing) who could directly introduce Euro Med with its specificity to all colleagues working

on projects in the National Agency. Another important activity which enabled new member states of enlarged EU get to know Euromed better was the meeting "8 + 10" (see box). Parallel to this process within the office, seven Polish youth workers were sent to different SALTO Youth Euromed training courses. We started to receive applications. Out of nine applications in 2004, two youth exchanges and three Action 5 projects were supported. Cooperation started to move on....till...2005!

Successful year of suspension!

Despite of reality "the suspension year" was till now the best time (in terms of supported projects) of Euro Med in Poland. Out of 12 applications, four youth exchanges and three training seminars were supported – more than ever before.

NA's point of view



Lisbon 2003

Looking back, I have some remarks to express:

1. quality in Euro Med projects – among the applicants (not supported) we had organisations which did not have real experience in multilateral international work, especially in so different cultural context. A well described application was not enough to guarantee qualitative project, especially the “partnership” issue. Having reliable partner is a very different thing from exchanging emails and sending each other partner agreements (what is part of the application). “Paper can accept everything, reality cannot!”. Partnership is crucial for successful project. But for number of reasons it is difficult to reach. Let me give an example: youth workers working together on Meda projects needs to be very good skilled in project management, but even more in intercultural learning – both have to be gained by experience and additionally suppor-

ted by the knowledge of history, religion, culture, geography and current situation in the region.

It is hard to imagine qualitative project by partners who do not know each other directly.

2. Procedures for applying – the long time between the deadline and first possible “project starting date” makes the whole process incredibly long. This affects many aspects: difficulty to keep active involvement of all coordinators (without mentioning youngsters), increase of international travel costs (cheap airlines do not help here!). But what is most important: the administrative dates limit the use of best tools in setting qualitative partnership.

What's next?

Looking towards the future of EuroMed one must be positive when it comes to EuroMed, otherwise it would be hard to continue. I am also convinced that new impetus would be brought by the opening of cooperation for interregional work with partner countries. This frame would allow young people and its organisations from all partner regions to have more direct experience of today's Europe.

As the framework of forthcoming programmes is getting clearer, it is worth to have strategic view again.

For this autumn we are planning to have two “information seminars” for experienced representatives of youth structures in the Youth Programme – these activities will be done in cooperation with two Polish trainers trained in the TOTEM training. Furthermore we will support participation of experienced youth workers in international training courses and seminars planned this year. Another international activity in which Poland will be involved this year will be Study Visit organised together with German National Agency for participants active in EVS from Germany, Poland, Israel and Turkey.

But real basis for future planning will be given at the end of the year, when the final shape of the EuroMed and Youth Programme will be known. Then it will be time to plan activities together with the “EuroMed Youth Units”.



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In December 2003 during a Euromed Meeting - gathering National Agencies Euromed Project Officers and Euromed National coordinators - Laszlo Foldi, previous

head of the Hungarian National Agency, proposed to bring together the eight new EU members' countries from Central and Eastern Europe and the ten Meda ones to know

each other better and to enhance cooperation opportunities. Some countries decided to support this idea and in March 2004 the first preparatory meeting for this event took place in Budapest. To this meeting participated: the Salto-Youth EuroMed Resource Centre, the Hungarian, Polish and Latvian National Agencies and National Coordinators of Israel and Tunisia.

Thus, the seminar was meant to offer the opportunity to NA EuroMed project officers of new EU Member countries (Eastern and Central Europe) and National coordinators from Mediterranean ones to learn more about each other “youth work” and “youth policy” as well as about local realities in order to : - better prepare all Euromed project officers/

National Coordinators to Euromed cooperation - improve the quality of Euromed projects - better support the beneficiaries of the EuroMed Youth Programme The Salto Youth EuroMed Resources Centre was charged of leading the seminar, facilitating the exchanges and writing the report.

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