

■ Trainer's point of view ▼

Education and Civilisation... a three years long journey around the Mediterranean sea

"A traveller without observation is a bird without wings."

MOSLIH ADIN SAADI



Venice 2006

I had the opportunity to be one of the trainers during the three Salto Youth EUROMED training courses "Education and Civilisation" which took place in Marrakech (2004), Cairo (2005) and Venice (2006). These courses aimed at realising and concretising the links between



Marrakech 2004

Education and Civilisation while verifying whether they are a driving force or a brake to the qualitative development of Euro-Mediterranean Voluntary Service (<http://www.salto-youth.net/educationcivilisation>). Each time, I experienced this training course as new adventure, it was never the same and it was a great possibility for learning and for improving my knowledge about several countries and cultures.

We used the venue as learning process resource: starting from the local community we undergo the journey through the different civilisations and educational systems. In each country, where we implemented the training course, we found a special environment; we met people and local organisations and we shared special feelings giving a "unique" taste to the learning experience of the group. I think that mee-

ting the local reality can be seen as the specificity of this training course ...without the support of the local community nothing is possible!

"Education and Civilisation" is really a trip through cultures, peoples and their experiences. We asked the participants, as a basic element of the training, to share their knowledge about their own civilisation, their own educational systems as they had experienced throughout their life...being them the actors in the learning process and the experts on the field.

In these three different events, I have learned a lot from their inputs, starting from their experiences...I have appreciated the richness of the differences and similarities between people coming from different countries and the discovery element as they do not know a lot about each other.

This knowledge is functional to the implementation of concrete actions and projects aiming at supporting young people in the own learning process within a framework of social and political complexity.



Cairo 2005

Trainer's point of view

"The great aim of education is not knowledge but action."

HERBERT SPENCER

How is it possible to develop a European Voluntary Service quality project without knowing our partner, meaning their educational background and their civilisation? How can we communicate if we have different representation/understanding of the same "word"?

The training course is the "safe space" for learning about civilisations and educational systems of others...sometimes so far away from ours.

Nowadays the development of quality projects (not only European Voluntary Service, of course) requires improving our knowledge and our competences about the Euromed context.

We have to keep in mind that the political and social framework is more and more sensitive and complex in a permanent changing process. Meda NGOs are developing their projects in this fragile context, therefore they need to acquire the necessary competences for "understanding /analysing" the environment around them and better support their youngsters' projects. In my opinion, it is important to acquire a general overview of the political and social systems in the Mediterranean area.

The more information we possess on the educational systems and civilisations, the better we can understand the project process and successfully communicate between partners.

Some conflicts, experienced during the projects implementation, may be caused by



Venice 2006



Venice 2006

misunderstanding or lack of information or by the fact that we did not assume a different point of view. The different social realities among the countries participating in the "Euromed Youth Programme" depend on their history and their current relations which cannot be "decoded" without specific reference points.

For these reasons it is important to conceive and develop projects capable of tackling fundamental themes (gender issue, active participation, citizenship, democracy, ...) and encouraging young people participation in this framework keeping in mind the main objective: to foster a deeper and mutual knowledge between the European and Mediterranean countries in order to develop exchanges and intercultural dialogue.

Thought open discussion about these topics, it is possible to break some prejudices and barriers preventing the development of a solid intercultural learning process within the youth field.

In this sense, the European Voluntary Service offers great possibilities for young people to actively participate as citizens in a project addressed to the hosting local community. It is a great and direct experience for participation in the Euromed context and for "testing" another country as citizen, not only as spectator. Young people mobility in the Euromed frame is a big

chance for quality meeting between people belonging to different social and cultural background...it gives possibilities for active discovery and for personal competencies improvement.

For all these reasons it is important to carry on proposing training opportunities and encouraging the exchange of good practices and cooperation between NGOs and youth workers within the Mediterranean region.

This is a crucial moment: new Programme "Youth in Action 2007-2013" is approaching and one among the general objectives should be the promotion of young people's active participation and mutual understanding between young people in different countries. The possibility to develop a European Voluntary Service project is a concrete way for achieving these general objectives.



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