



COORGANISED
WITH NA HUNGARY
AND NA GREECE

EuroMed Contact Making Seminars: sailing for future cooperation



The "Meet'In Euromed by the Danube" crew - Budapest.

When establishing a cooperation you can go for the short cut, which consists in preparing a project with the first partner you meet by chance (even on the internet) or for the longer way, which is more about the people and the organisations you want to involve in your future projects. The second path is longer and you need luck and patience but can it be very fruitful in terms of building a long-lasting partnership.

When planning the for the last year of the Youth Programme, the Salto EuroMed Resource Centre decided to bet on a couple of Contact Making Seminars.

It seems that nowadays, in the EuroMed context, there is a need to strengthen links by connecting people; by better informing

who is working in the field. Moreover, it is necessary to share our conceptions, to get aware of similarities and differences and to work on them as a common ground.

Because we (Sylvain and Davide), as trainers working for SALTO Euromed RC, like new scientific experiments, accepted to work together on these two new activities. Therefore, we tried to challenge the idea of the "usual" contact making seminar. With a mutual changing function of coordination between the two seminars and the support of colleagues, we were happy to embark on this new adventure. The challenge was on the air! There were two EU National Agencies interested to undertake it and to invest in EuroMed for the future: the Hungarian and the Greek National

Agencies which offered to host the CMS in their countries.

26 participants from 17 countries met in Budapest from 20 to 24 September for the Seminar "MEET'IN EUROMED BY THE DANUBE".

From the 15th to 19th of November in Hydra, a little Greek island, we followed the "EVS ODYSSEY IN EUROMED". This time the seminar brought together 30 participants from 17 EuroMed countries.

The frameworks of the two CMS were quite different. Both addressed to a particular target and both focused on a specific topic. The purpose of the first was to gather organizations working on a specific theme (sustainable development and globalisation) while the second addressed organisations dealing with one of the actions of the EuroMed Youth Programme (the European Voluntary Service, or EVS). Both Contact Making Seminars aimed to explore the new programme "Youth in Action" and the new Euromed framework in order to prepare participants for the new project phase.

Hopes and achievements

It was not always that easy to keep on the track given by the team – i.e. to look for sustainable partnerships without being too much project-oriented! We noticed instead the tendency to go for a project, to try to reach the final product without knowing really each other, without taking care of the people and of the process to arrive there. This has been our main goal during the two seminars: to highlight (without stressing it!) the magic triangle: "people, process, and product". Nonetheless, we had to take into account the world socio-political context (and especially in the Middle East). We did

Trainers point of view

not want to hide problems or embarrassments, while at the same time; we tried not to focus too much on sensitive situations. We simply underlined the importance of the commitment and the work of the participants/youth workers as multipliers and "bridge builders" among young people of EuroMed cultures and countries. Here again, the key-words were "partnership" and "cooperation". Naturally, some activities led also to free spaces for dialogue. The contacts established by the participants during the two seminars brought very different results: in some cases it was a very simple personal reflection or just a shared idea. So, many ideas turned into concrete projects and some new partnerships started to work. Some of the projects will focus on innovative topics (like a fair trade with Bedouins) or on inclusion (working with disabled people). Participants showed the will of keeping in touch and wished to transform these contacts into real moments for exchanging.

Some messages in a bottle

"If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see all problems as a nail"

– Abraham Maslow

So, explore all possible tools, by multiplying your means of action and the diversity of partnership in a global society.

"We are made of memory and desire."

– Manuel Vázquez Montalbán



Memory is the historical process of what we are now, our identity. Desire is the wings of our hopes. We can fly to try what we want for us and for the world. Take a chance!

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The specific aims of "MEET'IN EUROMED BY THE DANUBE" were to create a thematic space of EuroMed exchange of experiences and cooperation (in the field of sustainable development and global education/awareness), to get a wider perspective on the youth work related to these topics and also to give a chance to create partnerships based on sustainability and quality.



The fish in the net

Some quotes by participants of Budapest and Hydra

"This is my first CMS so I cannot judge correctly, but I made new friends and I want to cooperate with them in the future".

"I have got the feeling that the group grew together with the help of K., D&S. The whole process was round, a lot of answers and advice were given and contacts were built. The group atmosphere was fantastic. I personally found this atmosphere very important because it is easier this way to learn from each other, to lose fears and gain new partnerships and knowledge".

"We were like trees, we had solid roots in our civilization, culture and background,

with a big ability of opening to others, of sharing, meeting, learning and accepting".

"This seminar brought unknown people much closer to me, and also it let me see a lot of a world I did not know much of. I would have liked a bit more time to think plans, ideas over, or to have a longer conversation between potential partners."

"I have found partner organisations interested in the same topic as me. Unfortunately I cannot cooperate with some of the people because of the language barrier".

"Thank you for leaving time and rephrasing from pushing us into projects from projects." "Very good methodology, I learnt a lot of things. Fluent, peaceful, flexible attitude to each other.

Hydra

"EVS ODYSSEY IN EUROMED" aimed to create a space of EuroMed cooperation in the field of EVS, to facilitate the contact making between youth organisations active in this field, to support the creation and development of new innovative and qualitative EVS projects in EuroMed and to get a common understanding of voluntary work and various educational perspectives with regard to cultural diversity.



Group picture - Hydra.

Trainers point of view

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ARAGON COMMUNITY

Two WOMEN training on “Role and place of WOMEN in the Euro-Med context”

Lucia's point of view

I am sitting at my desk trying to sum up words to express my feelings, thoughts and reactions regarding the experience as female trainer in the SALTO training course “Women in Euro-Med: a kaleidoscopic sea of roles and places”¹. I realize that the “writer block” I am passing through is not due to laziness, disinterestedness or even lack of ideas but simply to the fact that until Zuriñe (my female training partner) and I were asked to write the article I had never focused on the peculiarity of being a woman training on “gender issues”.

The topic itself is not a novelty in my professional experience - being mainly committed in the inclusion of less advantaged women on a local field. Moreover, I am so deeply convinced of the necessity of the CONCRETE achievement towards gender equality (EFFECTIVE development means not simply social, but also political and economical) that I am very willing to promote and work in several initiatives in the Euro-Med area on the topic (my friends always joke saying that soon I'll have to deal with the inclusion of the poor alienated MAN!).

I know it might sound – to superficial ears - like the umpteenth propaganda of a boring feminist ...well... frankly I never pay attention to such judgments...!

Trying not to lose the thread of my speech and thus going back to my feelings when I was assigned the task, I realise now that I was so focused on the topic and sincerely eager to get the challenge of working on a such a level of training (team, organization and partner-



Participants workshop.

ship, participants) that I plunged completely into my role without even considering the personal “gender matter”. What I wanted to bring as personal contribution was “myself” as trainer and person as a whole, where my sex and gender play, of course, an important role but cannot surely be considered as the unique milestone of my personality !

I therefore wandered before the implementation if I would have been equal to the task, how it would have been working for the first time in a SALTO training course, how would I have been interacting and working with the team (the two trainers, Bernard Abrignani as coordinator and Flavia Giovannelli as rapporteur) and the participants and not least how the setting – the small town of Jaca in the Spanish Pireneis – would have influenced our work and the atmosphere.

The matter of being a woman myself and working in a situation where gender balance would not have been respected (weighing not surprisingly more on the “women representation”) never arouse distinctly until I was made noticing it by third eyes.

I had not even the chance to get “worried” about it that we had our preparatory meeting in June and the atmosphere was immediately serene, constructive and cooperative (where were all that female envy, inconclusive never-ending debating I had been warned about?). As Zuriñe points out “nothing of all this ever happened before, during and after the training”.

The preparation was hard and cooperative from all sides and moreover really professional and constructive and the implementation itself made no difference.

Only one thing disturbed Zuriñe and I: the different level of professional respect some participant showed towards us and to Bernard I want to think this attitude was unconsciously due the obvious overwhelming professional difference... otherwise it could be an interesting starting point for a psychoanalytical interpretation of the topic

itself and its treatment as subject of a training course.

I have to admit that my “female myself” came more consciously out when considering the results reached: seeing a heterogeneous group (with a numerically scant but professionally powerful group of MEN, all from MEDA countries) of youth workers interested and committed almost equally on the topic of gender equality made me feel proud first as a trainer and secondly as a WOMAN.

Also the expert intervention (Ms Sophie Dimitrulis from the organisation AFEM²) dealing with the latest governmental decision – both on national and on a Euro-Med level - made gush out my feminist side, a confused mixture of pride, anger towards unfairness, sense of powerlessness but at the same time determination to continue with my disturbing role - even if an apparently useless drop into the ocean - of trainer and worker on gender equality.

I really hope thus that this training course can be an example to be followed, to spread knowledge on the subject and to raise awareness: gender equality does not mean feminist counterattack but a more sensitive approach to our daily life. It is not daydreaming, but we have to believe strongly in it. All together, men included (where were European men??).



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1 - Held in Jaca – Spain (18th – 26th November 2006) in cooperation with the Spanish National Agency and the Aragon Government
2 - Association des Femmes de l'Europe Meridionale

Zuriñe's point of view

I was asked to write an article about how was my experience as a woman, working in a team of women in a Training Seminar about "Role and Place of women in Euromed", and it is not going to be an easy task, so I will try to do my best, although as a woman, as a trainer and as a human being it was a great experience and I felt very comfortable during the whole length of the seminar.

When I was first called to be part of the team and I saw four women names written in the trainers' list I thought : "Well, this looks a bit different to what I am used to see in SALTO teams"... and certainly it was. My second feeling was panic, because I know that a group of women together can make the world go round in the opposite way that it goes nowadays but I also thought it could be hectic, just basing my suspicions on stereotypes we always used when talking about women: we waste a lot of time talking, discussing, trying to go deeper in our knowledge of our personal life... I can tell you now that these are just stereotypes, and if you like your work, you have clear your task, you are committed and responsible, you respect the different opinions of your team, you are open to new points of view and you are sensitive with the issue, the work in the team and with the group can be a real pleasure, as in my case was.

Something that I felt - and as a feeling cannot be easily measured - it is that the attitude of the group towards Lucia and me was very nice since the beginning and it changed when our colleague Bernard arrived, it was possible a mixture of being a man, responsible of SALTO EuroMed, a



Intercultural evening.



Group picture.

more experienced person, but the reality is that participants were more relaxed thanks to his presence. I also noticed that the group was respecting us and our work a lot since the very first day, but these are the kind of attitudes we still see in our societies most of the time based on educational and religious background, a man talking unfortunately, is still more respected than a woman!

Most of the participants, were not aware, as it is part of the "normality" in modern societies, there are certain behaviours that are "deeply installed" among us in our daily life and we consider them normal. These are the kind of things that we, as trainers, group leaders, youth workers, need to start changing, first of all by raising people awareness and starting the change.

Among our participants there were just four men who did a good job among all these women, and I am not joking here, because the perspective they gave us about the situation of women in their countries was very appreciated, as of course, the one given by every single female participant, based in both personal and professional experience.

We talked about laws, international and European treaties, images and prejudices women in sport and we got a real perspective of the complexity of the topic, women and their role in society. It also showed us that we still need to work on breaking down personal and external barriers in order to create, as women, a more comfortable place in our families, communities,

societies and in this case, within the Euromed context.

The place we live in its religions or cultures have a great influence on us as women or men. Working for equality between both means taking into account the context and background we are coming from. In Jaca we got to create a space of equality for a week, we respected each other, our rights, our points of view, so why not getting it too out there?

To conclude I would like to say that it has been one of the most enriching experiences of my life and an amazing opportunity to know more about how different and how equal we women are, no matter where we are coming from. Our concerns, worries, expectations, dreams... are very similar. During the preparation of this training seminar I found a sentence I would like to share which says: **"She has the power to change her world, you have the power to help her do it"**. Let's start then!

**THE EDUCATIONAL REPORT
WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON**
www.salto-youth.net/euromed



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