



A journey full of experiences and learning through EuroMed

My journey through the EuroMed Youth Programme started with the **“Common Memory - Common Heritage” training course (Athens, Greece 20-28/06/2005)**, which aimed to reflect our cultural heritage through fairy tales, thus analyzing commonalities and differences in our cultures. We all know that fairy tales play an important role in our social life and reflect our cultures and value systems. Fairy tales are literary elements which have passed from one generation to another orally, therefore acting as a part of our culture. However, if we imagine culture as an iceberg (what’s invisible is more than what we can see), we realise that fairy tales act as tools for perceiving what is hidden in cultures since they are lodged in the memory of societies; through fairy tales people can express their values, dreams, hopes and fears. When we mention culture, we generally

focus on differences among cultures. In the “Common Memory - Common Heritage” training course, analysing the similarities and differences between cultures, I noticed that there are more elements in common than differences. Through fairy tales we discussed what each plant, animal, object, character, instrument and setting stands for in that particular culture, therefore learning about the link between symbolic elements in fairy tales and value systems in different cultures.

After going through the structure of a fairy tale and a classification of the genre we moved to the production phases of a tale; this gave me a unique chance to work with people from different cultures of both sides of the Mediterranean with the aim to create a fairy tale uniting at least one cultural element, object or character of each participant in the group and present it in a colorful and attractive way. We worked hard on the creation phases of a fairy tale, considering the tools and methods that we have learned, and we based our discussions on the way to reflect our cultural heritage in this fairy

tale and to unite all these objects, characters, places in a consistent way.

At the beginning, it was a great challenge for us to come up with a fairy tale both taking the technical aspects and methods into consideration and reflecting our shared values and common heritage. This production phase broadened my perspective on fairy tales and since then fairy tales seem to me a way of expressing things that we value as a society and putting forward what we have and feel inside ourselves and can’t put into words. The outcome was pretty good: we created fairy tales in accordance with what we learned in the production phases and uniting our basic cultural elements in our joined piece of work and exposing these fairy tales in a colourful way, making use of puppets, pictures, videos, role plays, music. These fairy tales are not only products of multicultural groups but also products of our common heritage which indicates that we have more in common than we actually think.

Learning in the EuroMed context, basic technicalities and tools in EuroMed and building new partnerships.



Participant point of view



My next participation in the EuroMed Youth Programme was the **“Step In” 2006 training course (Papiernicka, Slovakia)**. Learning about the EuroMed context, its priorities and objectives, then discussing what it means individually to us young people from both sides of Mediterranean, was a real eye-opener. Then what does EuroMed mean to us? Non-formal education, sharing of experiences and ideas, learning by doing and also doing by learning, widening our perspective in looking at different cultures, religions, nationalities, self awareness and discovery, intercultural learning, a pluralistic way of thinking, building on what we learn through partnerships in new projects and of course having fun while learning.

Personally, I believe that EuroMed reflects the most precious cornerstones of non-formal education, which gives us a chance to question, share, experience and create. We as participants are guided through this journey to discover something that we haven't experienced before and build on it all together by sharing ideas and our background knowledge. We are therefore actively involved in our learning process, and the whole architecture that we build upon with each training course is the result of the bricks contributed by each one of us; this of course underlines the significance of cooperation in the EuroMed family.

In the “Step In” training course, rotating workshops on “Action 1 & 2” deepened our understanding of the EuroMed context and the procedures to go through in the creation phases of Action 1 & 2 pro-



jects. Role plays and rotating workshops introduced us to the kind of realities and challenges that are waiting for us on our journey through EuroMed while implementing new projects. Getting experience of sending and hosting organisations and volunteers, building empathy with them, we are familiarised with potential cases in the implementation of Action 1 and 2 projects. In the EuroMed context we are not taught as participants but guided to learn, experience, share and build on this experience.

Multiculturalism is an important aspect of the EuroMed Youth Programme. In this training course, we not only learned the technicalities and good practices in the EuroMed field but we also found opportunities to meet people working on the same ground and build partnerships for our future project implementations. Coming together with colleagues from different countries and working on the same ground we exchanged ideas and created a project based on the priorities of

the EuroMed Youth Programme, which is anti-racism and intercultural learning. We came up with the idea of an Action 1 project which will increase young people's awareness in European and Mediterranean cultures and help build a bridge between them.

Finally we created the project “Building Bridges between European and Mediterranean Cultures using photography, literature and music as tools for common understanding” to encourage young people from both sides of the Mediterranean to meet and discover similarities between their cultures.

Gaining a deeper understanding of Education and Civilization as core concepts, education systems in different countries and the link between education and civilization.

The “Education and Civilization” training course (Venice, Italy, 24/05 - 01/06/2006) focused on education and civilization as core concepts, education systems in different countries and how



Participant point of view



education and civilization are correlated. Education as both formal and non-formal is part of our lives, shapes our identity and value systems and is closely linked with civilizations.

In EuroMed, we witness the basic principles of non-formal education by experiencing, observing, sharing, doing...

Bringing objects from our countries and discussing how these objects reflect our cultural heritage, we gained some input on civilization. We identified why we chose a particular object and how it is linked with our civilizations, which has shown us the commonalities and differences between cultures. We went deeper into education as a core concept and different kinds of education as formal, non-formal and informal education and the four pillars of education (religion, politics, commerce and intellectual,) identifying pillars which are common in different educational systems.

Rotating workshops on different educational systems gave us a better knowledge about current realities, good practices and challenges in the educational systems of different countries. We also had the opportunity to learn about youth policies in different countries. In Mestre we met different NGOs and were able to interview them on their aims, target groups and main activities. Choosing one of the NGOs, we reported on the Stella Mary's Organization, which aims to improve living conditions for seafarers, who are isolated from life on land. Learning from their experiences and witnessing their motivation to work for these people also inspired us to create new things in youth work.

Another focus of this training was the European Voluntary Service and its opportunities, good practices and various project ideas. Meeting two young people doing EVS in Italy, we were able to learn from their experiences, the challenges they faced and how the Service contributed to their own personal development. As I am planning to do EVS with EuroMed, it was very useful for me to



learn not only the technical aspects but also meet people who are realizing this activity.

The Education and Civilization training course was very significant, particularly in presenting us the link between education and civilization, different tools, methods, educational systems and non-formal education.

Intercultural learning in EuroMed

The EuroMed Youth Programme gives us the opportunity to improve our knowledge on a certain topic and to convert it into concrete youth work but also to discover our inner selves and reflect our ideas based on our background knowledge and experiences; this way we see the world beyond the borders of our countries. Intercultural learning is one of the most significant aspects of EuroMed. Each culture is like a unique colour in the world and people coming from different cultures add to the colour of the whole frame. EuroMed brings young people from both sides of the Mediterranean together and gives them a unique opportunity to experience cultural diversity. It is a place where people with different cultural backgrounds, ethnic origins, religions and perceptions of life meet and come up with a piece of joint work by sharing, exchanging ideas.

Through my journey in EuroMed, a lot has changed in my perspective into life, different cultures, religions, civilizations and value systems. The way we look at things influences the way we see things. After attending these three training courses my perspective into different realities has widened and now I know that nothing is white or black. There are different colours and it is through the meeting of a variety of colours that the world can be a more peaceful place to live in.



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