

YEPP - A collaboration that keeps on giving

From a small partnership started 12 years ago, to a thriving network of independent youth empowerment sites across Europe and beyond supported by a new central resource and training centre, the Youth Empowerment Partnership Programme (YEPP) concept stands as an incredible example of an ever-evolving collaboration that continues to make a difference. The YEPP International Resource Centre is the next phase of the YEPP programme, which ended in 2011. *Effect* asked two of the Centre's driving forces, Angelika Krüger and Jochen Schell, along with a representative of one of the long-standing partner foundations of YEPP, Antonella Ricci of Compagnia di San Paolo, to give a sense of the essence YEPP and how it has evolved to stay relevant.



What are the goals of the YEPP International Resource Centre (IRC) and how does it function?

Angelika Krüger and Jochen Schell: YEPP IRC is located in the Institute for Community Education (ICE) of the International Academy for Innovative Pedagogy, Psychology and Economics (INA) gGmbH at the Freie Universität Berlin.

Since 2012, it has supported the implementation of the "YEPP Concept of Change" in 17 YEPP Local Sites which are located in areas of social disadvantage in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Slovakia. The Centre provides training and coaching for local communities implementing or wanting to implement the "YEPP Concept of Change"; coordinates platforms for international exchange and learning; and evaluates the overall fulfilment of the common goals in the YEPP Community Network, which are youth and community empowerment; partnership; learning; and advocacy for sustainable change.

The collaborative element in YEPP has always been very important - what types of partners were involved and how were the opinions and needs of the young people themselves taken into account?

Angelika Krüger and Jochen Schell: YEPP was an initiative of a group of European and US foundations working with two programme partners: the International Academy for Innovative

Pedagogy, Psychology and Economics (INA) gGmbH at the Freie Universität Berlin, a non-profit organisation, and with OECD, an international public sector organisation.

For us, partnership has been one of the key concepts of YEPP. Cross-sectoral and multilevel partnerships have been a goal and a means from the very beginning, including both the transnational and the local dimension and have enabled the YEPP Community to achieve sustainable changes that would not be possible for one sector, one local stakeholder or one funder alone.

Within the YEPP framework, local stakeholders representing NGOs, local and regional foundations, municipalities and young people work together and commit to a joint strategic planning, implementation and evaluation process. One of the key principles of YEPP is to tackle youth-related issues with young people, not for them. At all levels, young people participate actively in decision-making processes and gain decision-making power. They run their own initiatives and become key actors in the local change processes.

Through intensive capacity-building (e.g. advocacy, entrepreneurship and media), transnational exchanges as well as youth-led initiatives young people learn to make their voices heard and to influence policies.

Compagnia di San Paolo was a very active participant in the YEPP programme, setting up numerous sites in Italy. Now it is a foundation partner of YEPP IRC. Why has this programme captivated this foundation so?

Antonella Ricci: Among the many positive elements of the programme I would like to highlight two factors that have been very attractive for the Compagnia di San Paolo when we decided to join. The first of them was certainly its strong methodological frame and the second one was its transnational dimension. The active participation of the entire communities where it is implemented was also very important in stimulating and activating our local partners, especially public authorities, in recognising the added value of YEPP.

What is it about the YEPP methodology that is so special, and is it one that can be replicated by other organisations working in different fields?

Antonella Ricci: YEPP was designed by prominent experts in the field of youth and community development who have constantly monitored and evaluated the application of the methodology. Since 2012, the YEPP IRC continues to provide needs-based methodological support to a range of stakeholders in the local communities where YEPP is implemented. The possibility to replicate the YEPP model in different contexts is strictly linked with the community-based approach of the programme which involves giving young people and their communities a voice so they can make choices for their future, according to their specific needs and aspirations. This is why each YEPP Local Site can develop different operational plans within a common frame outlined in the YEPP Manifesto and "Concept of Change." We hope to expand and spread the implementation of the approach further across Europe and beyond, which will involve building a critical mass of YEPP Local Sites and joining forces with more stakeholders and partners to influence youth policies.

Youth unemployment was identified in the evaluation of the programme as a point that needed further attention. How will the YEPP IRC take this up in the coming years?

Angelika Krüger and Jochen Schell: Historically youth unemployment has been an issue for the communities implementing the YEPP approach and methodology. In light of the

unstable labour market brought on by the crisis, in 2012 the Centre initiated an entrepreneurship education and coaching programme for young people and youth coaches living in disadvantaged communities. The programme facilitates exchange, collaboration and learning opportunities between European youth and youth coaches through transnational workshops, webinars and joint projects. The programme is designed to help young people gain skills and confidence that are necessary to create sustainable business and social enterprise models. The young people learn to connect local needs and resources, generate income and benefit the wider communities in which they operate.

YEPP IRC has now partnered with the Berlin-based Entrepreneurship Foundation to make the online entrepreneurship tools available to young people from disadvantaged communities.

What value has the international dimension of YEPP had? Why is it important?

Antonella Ricci: I think the international dimension within the programme has a huge value because it provides the different people involved in YEPP (young people, youth workers, NGOs, public authorities, foundations) with the opportunity to meet and exchange at transnational level, helping to create a real community. This offers them an extraordinary learning opportunity within the YEPP transnational network that is particularly relevant when you think of people like social workers or disadvantaged young people that tend to concentrate on a very local level.

YEPP IRC acts as a focal point for the YEPP Community and organises international conferences and youth meetings, self-development workshops, training sessions, thematic youth exchanges and media workshops. Within the YEPP transnational network there is also the possibility to develop joint project activities or events focusing on specific issues that allow those involved to broaden their expertise and to make connections, across Europe and beyond.

www.yepp-community.org/yepp-irc
www.compagniadisanpaolo.it