



# YEPP IRC "YEPP" as a Key Approach for Rural Development

If you are interested in our expertise on empowering youth and communities in rural areas, please contact us:

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## Rural Youth in Europe

According to the latest European Commission articles on rural development and policies (2007-2013) in Europe, rural areas represent more than 90% of EU territory and contain more than half of the EU's population. Rural areas can be beautiful and relaxing but must also confront important challenges. These include a lack of public infrastructure, human services and medical facilities. Young people living in these areas often face the following problems:

- fewer opportunities for formal and non-formal education: a lack of specialised schools and universities as well as youth NGOs
- unemployment: there is a limited job market and high unemployment rate among young people
- leisure: few or no cultural infrastructure, e.g. theatre, cinema, concert venues or youth clubs
- limited transport and mobility: public transport system is underdeveloped,
- inadequate healthcare: the nearest hospital is far away
- alcohol, smoking and drug abuse due to boredom and lack of opportunities: a local bar is often the only meeting point in the village
- depopulation and brain drain into bigger cities
- lack of information about youth-related issues, opportunities and initiatives
- digital divide: new technologies are not available or non-existent and Internet is slow or costly.

## Empowerment of Rural Communities

Its work with marginalised and disadvantaged communities has convinced the YEPP International Resource Centre (YEPP IRC) that enabling rural communities to improve their situation, and especially the situation of their youth, should be one of the highest priorities.

The YEPP IRC builds on the expertise of the Youth Empowerment Partnership Programme (YEPP) which was implemented in Europe in 2001-2011 and transformed into YEPP IRC in 2012. The "YEPP" approach and methodology

was developed for social inclusion of disadvantaged groups in urban and rural areas in Europe.

## The "YEPP" Concept of Change

The "YEPP" Concept of Change is based on the following set of principles which are put into action to achieve the goal of youth and community empowerment in rural areas:

- Building a common ground at local, regional, national and transnational levels through dialogue and advocacy activities
- Building cross-sectorial partnerships of local stakeholders, e.g. municipalities, local foundations, NGOs, residents and young people
- Promoting active citizenship and the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in decision-making processes
- Facilitating non-formal learning of young people and local stakeholders at all levels with participatory and interactive methods
- Building capacities of local stakeholders in the field of youth and community empowerment, entrepreneurship, media work and advocacy
- Monitoring and evaluating local activities with participatory methods involving young people
- Training young people in conscious use of the media and on how to make their voices heard through new technology.

The rural areas where the "YEPP" approach and methodology has been implemented and led to significant changes are:

### YEPP Kecerovce-Olšava, Slovakia:

Young Roma people have set up youth clubs and social enterprises in several villages and work in close collaboration with the local municipalities, schools and NGOs. Projects include work in the field of art & culture (wall-art, fashion design, talent shows), education & labour (collaboration with vocational schools, English classes, student clubs) and advocacy & civic engagement



## YEPP IRC

(young people sitting on municipal councils and being active in local decision making processes).

### YEPP Langhe, Cebano–Monregalese-Valle Tanaro (CEBMONTAN), Monviso, Valle Stura, Italy:

In Langhe young people have set up self-managed youth clubs and media groups running web radios and video projects. They work in close collaboration with local newspapers and organise regular international exchange including street theatre performances. In CEBMONTAN young people run campaigns to promote tourism in their mountain area. In Monviso they organise community-building activities through sports such as rafting and classes in music making, writing, Hip Hop dancing and video making. In Valle Stura a mobility project in the form of a self organised shuttle bus service has been set up in the community.

### YEPP Kristinestad, Finland:

Permanent structures for youth empowerment have been established such as a youth council, a youth parliament (13-18 years old) and a children's parliament (7-12 years old). Young people who want to have a summer job are supported through a system of "summerjob cheques".

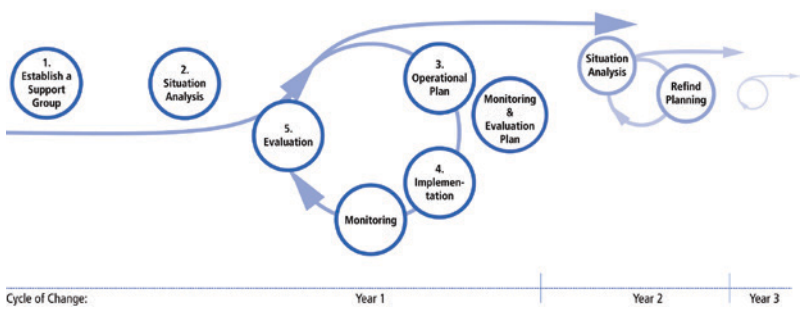
### YEPP Gornja Tuzla and Tuzla Simin Han, Bosnia & Herzegovina:

Children aged 9 to 14 take part in the Leadership Project, which develops their civic awareness and confidence to initiate change in their community. As they get older, they can implement this change through projects funded by the Tuzla Community Foundation through Youth Bank. A Youth Council as well as Youth Clubs have been established as opportunities for young people to actively participate in public life.

## The "YEPP" Cycle of Change

One of the essential parts of the YEPP Concept of Change is the "YEPP" Cycle of Change. It is driven by an ongoing process of analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and aims at bringing about sustainable social change to local communities.

In the "YEPP" approach and methodology, young people are seen as a driving force in their community. They work together with local stakeholders, such as NGOs, schools, business representatives and local authorities and are guided through the participatory process of the "YEPP" Cycle of Change by experienced youth workers. In this process, young people are enabled to participate in local decision-making processes, create change within their communities and become active citizens in the wider society. The local work is combined with international capacity building workshops and trainings in advocacy, media work or entrepreneurship. It is enriched through exchange with peers from other communities and countries in the YEPP Community Network. Currently, the "YEPP" approach and methodology is being implemented in more than 70 communities across Europe, including Bosnia & Herzegovina, Ireland, Italy, Finland, Germany, Poland and Slovakia.



## Benefits of "YEPP" for Rural Youth and Their Communities

- More positive local identity, learning to appreciate the local environment, as well as available resources
- Stronger self-confidence through participatory learning methods
- Team-working skills and experience in working hand in hand with local authorities and community stakeholders
- Experience of community-rooted project management through the needs assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of common projects
- Stronger creative and entrepreneurial skills, inspiration to start new projects, local initiatives or businesses which can greatly benefit rural communities
- Stronger analytical skills due to monitoring and evaluation processes
- Intercultural competence and increased sense of tolerance for and interest in other cultures after YEPP transnational youth meetings and conferences
- Stronger English skills
- Better visibility for local youth work at the European level as a result of joint advocacy work in the YEPP Community Network