



Education and Culture DG

'Youth in Action' Programme



## **YOUTH IN ACTION PROGRAMME**

**“Everything is possible, one just has to  
want it”**

## **EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT OF THE OPEN DOOR - PROJECT**

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## INTRODUCTION

This report details the findings of the external evaluation of the Open Door Project undertaken by Dr Joe Francis, Head of Social Work in the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh.

Eight partners from four countries participated in this project: two from Italy, two from Spain, two from Sweden and two from Greece.

The **General Objective** of the Open Door project, as stated in the funding application, was:

- “To provide an opportunity for a group of professional people belonging to Public Bodies and Youth NGOs... to work together through the activation of concrete actions involving young people, exchange good practices and start a long term cooperation process within the context of non formal education”.

**Specific Objectives** of the project were:

- “To promote the integration between professionals (Social Services and NGOs working and based in suburban areas) who work with young people with fewer opportunities”
- “To promote the inclusion and the participation of young people in designing, planning and delivering services/activities for young people”
- “To identify innovative methods to engage and reach young people living in suburban areas their children without feeling overstrained”

The external evaluation examined these key aspects of the project and this report is based upon the findings in relation to these areas. The report concludes with a summary and discussion of the key findings.

## **AIMS OF THE EVALUATION**

Three central components of evaluation research are suggested in the literature, namely, objectives, process and outcomes (Goldberg and Connolly, 1982).

1. **Objectives** - what did the Open Door Project set out to achieve?
2. **Process** - what means were employed to plan, manage and implement the Open Door Project?
3. **Outcomes** - how successfully were the objectives achieved? What factors indicate success, were there any unanticipated consequences?

The external evaluation aimed to examine:

- The extent to which the project has met its stated **objectives**
- Whether the project achieved the desired **outcomes**
- The **process** in terms of **how** the project worked in practice

## **DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The trans-national nature of the project placed limitations on the methodology used in the evaluation. It was not feasible to conduct individual interviews or focus group discussions with participants in the project due to budget constraints and time restrictions. Consequently, the researcher adopted a pragmatic evaluation design and gathered data through:

- Direct observations at Project Planning Meetings
- Structured data schedule from the local coordinators involved in each of the partner groups
- Structured questionnaire from young people who participated in the project

General communication with the project co-ordinator and local co-ordinators has mainly been by email as this proved to be the most efficient means of disseminating information or obtaining additional information when necessary.

The External Evaluator attended two project planning meetings (Venice April 2008 and Madrid July 2008) to prepare the evaluation design and to observe the project coordination/management process in operation. Unfortunately, due to ill-health, the external evaluator did not attend the final meeting in Brussels in October 2009.

In order to assist local coordinators to provide feedback about the project, a seminar was organised and a structured evaluation schedule was devised during the project meeting in Madrid (see Appendix 1). The evaluation schedule asked project coordinators to provide details on key areas which were common to each of the local partner projects. Specifically, the evaluation schedule covered;

- Project Organisation
- Project Meetings
- Project Management
- Project Communication
- Project Methods
- Quantitative Data
- Project Outcomes

Finally, questionnaires were sent to each of the local coordinators for distribution to all young people who participated in the project (see Appendix 2). These questionnaires included both open and closed questions aimed at gathering quantitative and qualitative data on the participants' experience.

This report begins by examining the data provided under the seven headings in the structured evaluation schedule and then goes on to look at the feedback provided by the young people who completed questionnaires.

## **PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

The project concept was initially formulated within the context of an ENSA-Youth Network meeting in Brussels in early 2007 with an outline proposal initiated by the Veneto Region. The project idea was to invite young people living in suburban areas to suggest their own ideas about how their neighbourhoods could be transformed into better living environments. This proposal was approved following application to the Youth in Action Programme in June 2007 and then developed more formally during a pre-project planning meeting held in Venice in April 2008. This was the first event which brought together the project coordinator and the local coordinators from the partner countries to establish shared plans for the project's implementation in each of the partner areas.

This initial pre-planning meeting, coordinated by the Veneto Region, was very successful, establishing a sound basis for the effective and efficient operation of the project as a whole. The partner representatives had a positive overall assessment of the meeting and were provided with valuable information which enhanced their knowledge base concerning the proposed aims, structure and operation of the project. The meeting also promoted formal and informal working arrangements between the partners and the value of the latter feature was crucial to the overall success of the project, representing a solid foundation to take forward collaboration between the partners in the participating countries.

## **PROJECT ORGANISATION**

The Veneto Region was responsible for the overall coordination and good management of the project and for the interactions with the EU Commission. The management of the project was based on a Steering Committee composed of one lead representative from each partner country, together with the Project Manager and the Transnational Secretary from Veneto Region. Information exchange among partners was organized by the Transnational Secretary in cooperation with the Project Manager. A change of personnel occurred in the Veneto Region following the

departure of one of the lead persons there but this was dealt with very effectively and had no apparent impact on the efficient management of the project.

The pre-planning meeting in Venice in April 2008 established good joint-working practices, including ground-rules concerning communication and conduct of business meetings. This was followed by another very successful meeting and seminar in Madrid in July 2008 where more detailed planning was undertaken and agreement reached about the structure, nature and delivery of the project activities in each of the partners' areas. For example, due to the unexpected withdrawal of 2 national partners before starting the project and the introduction of a new partner, some activities and their temporal division were modified and adapted to the new situation during the meeting in Madrid. Moreover, the seminar that was conducted during the meeting addressed the nature and process of project evaluation and a detailed evaluation framework (Appendix 1) was produced following discussion and input which was led by the external evaluator.

## **LOCAL PROJECT ORGANISATION**

Formally agreed management arrangements between the project coordinators (Veneto Region) and the national partners were a necessary feature of the project and these were successfully achieved through the Steering Committee. However, flexibility was also required in order to facilitate the successful delivery of the project in each of the local areas. Consequently, project organisation at local level encapsulated a variety of arrangements that were designed to accommodate local needs and interests. So, while there were many similarities in the organisational aspects of the local projects, the high degree of individualisation in evidence in the different countries is viewed as a positive feature of the project.

Thus, in Greece, a small team of four people were involved in setting-up and running the project and were responsible for coordinating the process and financial management of their local project. The group set up four help desks and advertised the project through press bulletins in local newspapers and on the Internet. The group then interviewed and discretely selected young people with social problems and

offered them the opportunity to participate in the competition. Professionals, such as a dance teacher and a musician, volunteered to help the young people to improve themselves and become a team working with new ideas.

The Partners in both Italy and Spain worked closely together and reported that the objectives, processes, methodology and programme of activities were clear from the beginning of the project. They found that good planning facilitated its correct development. The Italian partners and the Spanish partners established continuous and effective communication channels within their group; ensured that all in their project were kept informed about matters; cleared up doubts or questions arising in the delivery of the project; and took decisions about the project. In this way the partners in these countries felt that they achieved one of the specific project objectives, namely, effective integration between professionals from NGO's and Public Bodies.

The Swedish partners - Växjö Municipality & BGif – also worked together closely in the local organisation of the project. Together they coordinated the involvement of the municipal employment support agency for youth; representatives of a school in Araby; administrators from local government arts, culture and leisure amenities; young people in focus City group against violence; and some ONG in Araby.

In general, organisation of the projects at local level was very successful, particularly in relation to the stated aim of improving integration between NGOs and Public Bodies, but some problems were also encountered. Partners in Italy and Spain, for example, reported that some aspects of the development phase of the contest were shortened. The Diffusion Phase was reduced from 3 months planned to 1 real month and the Implementation Phase from 9 months planned to 6 real months. Reduction in the length of these phases meant that they did not reach as many youth as they expected in the diffusion phase and also entailed some difficulties in the implementation of the successful proposals.

## **PROJECT MEETINGS**

Project meetings were an important feature of the local management and delivery of the programme. In Greece project meetings were held once per month, where all the groups decided about when, how and where activities should take place. Swedish partners held several meetings with representatives of all the organisations involved in the project together with administrators from the municipality.

In Spain the coordinating role was assigned to the Network organization Coordinadora. Two partners were involved in the project and Coordinadora ensured a constant dialogue between the partners. Local partners maintained weekly contacts and meetings were also held at least once each three months. The partners in Italy and Spain reported that their meetings supported general and specific planning in the projects there. Both countries found that good definition of the aims and the timetable in each meeting contributed to them being practical and useful with a supportive and productive work environment.

## **PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

As with other aspects of the project, Project management at local level reflected a high degree of integration, with professionals from NGO's and Public Bodies sharing responsibility for all aspects of the project including financial management and organisation of the local competitions.

Project Management in each of the partner countries suffered some delays and modifications due to the change of personnel in the project coordinator and the adjustment of the initial planned budget to a final budget. However, these appear to have been relatively minor matters that have been handled effectively and efficiently by the local management teams.

## **PROJECT COMMUNICATION**

Communication proved to be a vital factor in the organisation, management and delivery of the local projects. Feedback from the local coordinators suggests that a range of communication methods were employed and that there were mixed experiences in relation to the effectiveness of these at both local and international levels.

In Greece, young people involved in the project were encouraged to communicate with group members by telephone, internet and MSN (Hotmail Messenger), in order to promote information-sharing on their own, and also to give them the chance to develop a sense of responsibility.

In Sweden, communication about the project began with a press conference and an exposition in the Town Concert Hall. Additionally, the group used posters and information in the local radio as well as face-to-face communications by the ONGs and BGif in daily contact with the young people.

While partners in Spain and Italy reported that there was good communication among the local partners during the entire project, they also felt that trans-national partners did not fully exploit the possibilities of keeping in touch with each other and exchanging experiences. Both of these countries felt that there was more scope to face up to difficulties together and to learn from the experiences in other countries. These partners reported that communication with the international partners has not been continuous and the email exchange has been concentrated in the days before and after the meetings, although the coordinator tried to set up a more intensive contact between the partners.

## **PROJECT METHODS**

As reported in other sections of this report, the Open Door Project adopted a variety of innovative and challenging approaches to engage local young people and to deliver the aims of the project. Among the methods used to address different aspects of the

project were: focus groups; press conferences; help desks; poster presentations; expositions; peer groups/educators; and information meetings between adult educators and young people.

Given the complex, varied and innovative nature of the project, it was not surprising to find that mixed experiences were reported by the coordinators. In Greece, for example, information about the project was first made available by a press bulletin and then was uploaded onto the Internet and posted in central road and school signs. These methods appear to have been very successful in this situation, resulting in many young residents attending the local help desks and asking to participate. The project coordinator in Greece reported that the, “*Community joyfully and proudly accepted the participations*”.

A committee of three people selected the best three ideas - instead of one - dividing the amount of the award as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> award: 2000 € to the dance group
- 2<sup>nd</sup> award: 1500 € to the traditional music
- 3<sup>rd</sup> award: 1000€ to the hip-hop group .

Each of the successful groups then had peer leaders attached to the group.

In Italy and Spain, the focus groups organized in the initial phase of the project helped to design the actions and the methodology of the contest. Coordinators in these countries reported that meetings with educators and young people improved the quality of the process because they incorporated the experience and the point of view of the target group and those working with them. For example, posters and depliants were designed in Madrid with a youth-focused style and the webpage of the project ([www.asociaciones.org/opendoor](http://www.asociaciones.org/opendoor)) facilitated the dissemination of the contest due to its accessible and youthful design

As with the other partner groups, the establishment of a Help Desk during the collection of proposals was planned to provide support for young people interested in

participating in the contests in Spain and Italy. The existence of the help desk in Padua was promoted widely in the publicity materials which were also disseminated in the Padua High School and with the co-operation of Padua Municipality.

However, despite adopting a broadly similar strategy to the Greek partners, the experiences of using the help desk in Italy and Spain were not so good. Italian partners reported that *“the real use of the help point by youth people in Padua was not as high as we wished”*. Similarly, partners in Spain reported that, *“There were no more than five requests in the month it was opened”*. It appears that ‘word of mouth’ was a more effective way of disseminating information about the project among the young people in these partner countries.

Another effective method adopted by the Spanish partners was the development of a thirty-hours course involving fourteen young people between 16 and 18 years old. These young people were taught about social competences, participation and development of projects by a group of experienced trainers. The training was advertised in the high school of the district and in the youth organizations. The participants in the training were informed about the contest and some of them presented proposals, of which one was approved. The participants in turn disseminated information about the project among young people of the district.

The Spanish coordinator reported that the young people’s evaluation of the training was very good stating that,

*“they valued as positive the possibility to receive non formal education in contrast with the official learning and the acquisition of skills aren’t learned in other places”*.

Partners in Sweden reported that the ONGs, schools and BGif made contact with the local youth and started the competition in three Youth Centres. They found that the help desk started to work and that youngsters brought ideas to the youth leaders and to the helpdesk. No additional information was provided about the further development of this experience.

## PROJECT OUTCOMES

**GREECE** – Feedback from the Greek project coordinator indicates that outcomes there were very successful and she reported that four people were involved in organising and delivering the local project and thirty four young volunteers participated in it.

Youth and peer leaders were trained for the competition and as a result, impact on their neighbourhoods was viewed positively. The local coordinator reported that,

*“they enjoyed the children’s work, they loved their young neighbours’ winning ideas”.*

She also stated that,

*“The three winning groups presented their ideas 1) in “Agios Andreas” (an institution for abused and neglected children) and 2) in the municipal theatre of Alimos where the Mayor of Alimos made the awards to the young people and their groups. By the end of the presentation, a party was organised for the groups’ celebration, where photos and videos were taken”.*

On a very practical level, the Greek partners noted that they did not receive the full amount of money in the initial stage, so they could not give the winning prizes. As a result, the groups’ members had to pay on their own for their equipment (clothes, studio), until the rest amount of money was/is received.

Finally, the Greek project coordinator reported that,

*“people who stay in Alimos liked OPEN DOOR program so much that they asked for more programs of the European Union”.*

**ITALY** - Feedback from the Italian group indicates that there were mixed experiences in relation to the project outcomes.

So far as the local and project-wide aims and objectives are concerned the coordinator stated that,

*“The aims and the objectives of our local project were achieved. We have established communication and cooperation channels among professionals of NGO’s and Public Bodies who work with youth with fewer opportunities and we have promoted a contest for the integration of young people across the participation. About the wide objective we have contributed with our experience in the implementation of the project and in the identification of innovative methods to engage young people”.*

In relation to the project competition itself, feedback from the coordinator suggests that;

*“the project had a very good reception among the professionals working with youth in formal and non formal frameworks. Youth entities and organized groups which have professionals working with them have been the most participatory”.*

However, the Italian partners also found that motivating young people to participate in the initial stage of the project was one of the weaknesses of the competition. Feedback indicated that, *“The beneficiaries wanted something else other than the possibility to implement their ideas”*. Moreover, the Italian team found that the short information dissemination period didn’t enable them to reach a lot of young people within the allotted timeframe and they subsequently received some requests after the deadline of the contest.

Despite these difficulties partners in Italy still selected and implemented successful ideas from young people who participated in the project. In terms of youth participation, the Italian local project received four proposals from young people, of which 2 projects were approved and subsequently developed by a small group of young people. These successful proposals then promoted the participation of a much larger number of young people particularly in three creative workshops: Electronic music workshop; Writing workshop; Theatre workshop

The young people involved in the development of the proposals expressed the importance of having the opportunity to carry out their ideas thanks to both the financial and logistical support provided by the project. Most of the young people involved expressed their intention to plan and develop other activities in the future too.

Feedback from the Italian coordinator states that,

*“All the developed proposals have had a positive impact on our neighbourhood, even the involved young people had promoted this impact using social networks and contacts to reach as many participants as were possible”.*

**SPAIN** – Like the group in Italy, the Spanish partners also indicated that they had mixed experiences. The aims and objectives of their local project were largely achieved as they too established communication and cooperation channels among professionals of NGO's and Public Bodies in Madrid who work with youth with fewer opportunities. However, while they were successful in promoting a contest for the integration of young people across the participation, they initially encountered difficulty in motivating young people to participate and felt that the short time in diffusion did not enable them to reach a large number of young people at that stage.

Along with their achievements at the local level, the coordinator in Spain also reported that the group in Madrid were successful in contributing to the wider objective of the trans-national project with their experience in the implementation of the project and in the identification of innovative methods to engage young people.

In total, the local project in Madrid received sixteen ideas from organized groups, youth entities and people from the training course. Only one proposal came from an informal group and it was received after the closing date for the competition.

The selection of winning ideas in Madrid was done by a group of six people composed of local authority workers (culture and education departments), regional authorities (Youth department) and professionals working in the field of the education

and participation of young people. The members of the selection group were interested in the project and in its development and so the criteria used for the selection of the successful ideas were: performance of the contest requirement; capacity to develop the idea; benefit for the neighbourhood; and adjustment to the proposed budget.

Eight ideas were approved and seven were developed. The subjects of these proposals were: Football Tournament, Bike Parking, Radio Workshop, Comic Workshop, Video Forum, Study Visit and Ethnic Musical Instruments Workshop.

The implementation of the proposals suffered personal, temporal and capacity difficulties. One of the selected groups resigned the prize due to personal reasons. In another group one of the members could not participate in the development of their proposal. With these exceptions most of the proposals have been a success with a high participation of young people and the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities.

All of the proposals developed in Madrid were reported to have had a positive impact on their neighbourhood. Some ideas promoted good co-existence and mutual knowledge among different youth groups, like the football tournament and the video forum. Other successful proposals increased accessibility in the neighbourhood (bicycle parking) and projects also improved the skills of the young people in diverse themes like the radio or ethnic musical instruments workshops.

**SWEDEN** - Aims and Objectives were met on a number of different levels. Local NGOs and Public Bodies, including personnel from the municipal employment support agency for youth, representatives of the school in Araby, administrators from local government arts, culture and leisure amenities, City group against violence and some ONGs, worked together collaboratively. Together they helped to organise the competition and subsequently jointly selected good ideas and provided support for their implementation

The project in Sweden engaged the participation of disadvantaged young people through meetings to discuss the development and implementation of the ideas and to agree practical matters such as dates and methods of working. In addition, the youth leaders and peer leaders from the winning projects held some workshops and training with the municipality and BGif before they began implementing the activities.

## **QUANTITATIVE DATA**

In Italy 25 people from NGOs and Public Bodies (including selection committees; focus groups; trainers) were involved in the organisation and delivery of the project. Seven young people were involved in developing project ideas and 4 proposals were presented of which 2 were selected. Five young people trained as youth/peer support leaders and 5 other young people were actively involved in implementing project ideas. In total, the project outputs benefited 150 young people, children and parents.

In Spain 50 people from NGOs and Public Bodies (including selection committees; focus groups; trainers) were involved in the organisation and delivery of the project. Twenty-eight young people were involved in developing project ideas and 16 proposals were presented of which 7 were selected. Fourteen young people trained as youth/peer support leaders and 30 young people were actively involved in implementing project ideas. In total, the project outputs benefited 100 young people.

The Swedish project involved 9 people from NGOs and Public Bodies in the organisation and delivery of the project. A total of 100 young people were reported to have used the help desk and information meetings, and 600 young people participated in the development or delivery and benefit of the activities.

The Greek project included 5 youth workers from NGOs and Public bodies and 50 young people who helped develop the ideas. Of these 50 young people, 38 were young people with 'fewer opportunities' and an additional 50 benefited indirectly from the project.

Table 1 provides a summary of the total number of people involved in the project across the partner countries.

**Table 1 – Number of Project Participants**

	<i>Total</i>
<i>Number of partners involved in the project</i>	<b>8</b>
<i>Number of countries involved in the project</i>	<b>4</b>
<i>Number of youth workers involved in the project</i>	<b>65</b>
<i>Number of young people involved in the project</i>	<b>630</b>
<i>Number of young people with fewer opportunities involved</i>	<b>348</b>
<i>Number of young people benefiting indirectly from the project</i>	<b>1400</b>

## **FEEDBACK FROM YOUNG PEOPLE**

Young people were invited to provide feedback about their experience of being involved in the project through use of a structured questionnaire. A total of 42 questionnaires were returned including 19 from Greece, 8 from Spain, 7 from Italy and 8 from Sweden.

### **Age**

The ages of respondents ranged from 15 years to 25 years. A slight majority of the respondents were under the age of twenty years (n=23) and almost half were 20 years old or older (n=19).

All of the Spanish respondents were under the age of 20 years. More than half (n=10) of the Greek respondents were aged 20 years or older; half of the Swedish respondents were aged 20 years or older; more than half (n=5) of the Italian respondents were aged 20 years or older.

### **Gender**

Of the total number of 42 respondents, 24 were Female and 18 were Male. Notably, a large majority of respondents from Greece were female (n=16) while all of the

Swedish respondents were male. The majority of the Spanish respondents were female (n=6) while the Italian respondents were more balanced in terms of gender, with 3 female and 4 male.

### **Ethnic Origin**

All of the Spanish and Greek respondents described themselves as 'White European'. The Italian respondents described themselves as 'Italian'. The Swedish respondents were very mixed in terms of ethnicity – 3 described themselves as 'South American', 1 as 'Swedish born South American', 2 described themselves as 'Palestinian' while 1 described himself as 'Kosovan' and the final one as 'Swedish'.

### **Disability**

None of the Swedish or Italian respondents reported any disability. One of the Spanish respondents suffered from a physical mobility disability. A substantial minority of the Greek respondents reported disabilities - Two suffered from weight problems, one had visual impairment, one had a mobility disability, one suffered from depression and another from agoraphobia. Several of the Greek respondents referred to disadvantages such as financial problems and divorced parents.

### **Information about the Projects**

The majority of the Greek respondents heard about the project through 'word of mouth' (friends and neighbours) while others heard from their dance teacher, through the cultural department of the municipality or through the project leaflet and project poster. All of the Greek respondents indicated that the project aims were clear and that the information they received was useful. Seven respondents made suggestions about ways of improving the information about the project. These suggestions included; printing a brochure; providing information on an internet site; giving information through schools; more publicity and advertisement; more specific details about the project; posters.

The Spanish respondents all indicated that they heard about the project through their youth workers. All of the young people were clear about the aims of the project though four indicated that they misunderstood the information about the prize money.

These four young people suggested that it would have been helpful to have given more time for the development of ideas as they felt the project was very quick.

Several of the Italian respondents heard about the project through friends but some heard through the internet and one from their theatre teacher. All of the Italian respondents felt that the aims of the project were clear and that the information they received was helpful. Two respondents felt it would have been useful to have given more specific information about the process of the project, including details of meetings, cooperation between groups and financial details.

One of the Swedish respondents heard about the project through their youth worker, another from a poster. The remainder heard through 'word of mouth' (mainly friends). The majority were clear about the aims of the project but some were initially unclear until information was provided through meetings. Most felt that the information that was provided was helpful but one thought there was too much information and another felt it would have been helpful to have had more information.

### **Participation**

**GREECE** – Ten of the young people who returned questionnaires were involved in preparing and implementing a proposal for the local competition in Greece while the other 9 were actively involved in the project activities. The vast majority of the respondents were pleased with the support they received from the local coordinators and all of the young people, except one, said that their involvement in the project was a worthwhile experience.

At one level, the respondents particularly enjoyed the opportunity to meet and engage with other young people. Many made similar comments to the following;

*“It gave us the opportunity to get to know not only each other but also a lot of other people”*

*“It was a great experience. I had fun and communicated with lots of people and especially I struck up friendship with some of the participants”*

Other young people talked about how they appreciated the chance to learn a new skill or gain a new experience.

*“I learned more things about music”*

*“It was an exceptional experience for me. It was the first time I took part to a contest and this made me feel important, special. I was very happy being part of a team trying to do art”*

For some, the experience was worthwhile because the project helped them to fulfil their existing ambition, with one young person saying;

*“Open Door motivated our band to continue”*

In addition to feeling that the project had been a worthwhile experience for themselves, 15 of the 19 respondents said that they felt the project had produced many good ideas that were useful for their neighbourhood. One young woman said;

*“It motivated many young people to develop ideas, interpersonal relationships, friendships, talent”*

Two other young women thought the project was useful, commenting;

*“It was quite helpful to my neighbourhood because we did a lot of things together and we created a bond between us”*

*“It helped people of the community to work together as a group and improve relationships”*

Only one of the Greek young people said that they did not feel the project had helped them to become more involved in their neighbourhood. The remainder were very positive about this aspect of their experience, commenting not only on the opportunity to integrate more fully into the community but also on the degree of personal development that the project had engendered. Some of the young people said;

*“Now I have more interests. I’ve known more people. I feel more connected to them and more willing to share my ideas with them”*

*“I became more outgoing and met some neighbours of mine”*

*“I met different people with whom, although we live in the same neighbourhood, we had never had the chance to work together”*

Many of the young people expressed a sense of community responsibility and integration and several young people talked about their own growth as individuals;

*“Through the project I realised that becoming more involved in my neighbourhood and getting to know my neighbours is something pleasant and relaxing”*

*“I came closer to the people of my neighbourhood”*

*“It makes me a better person with a conscience”*

*“I am in the youth council now!”*

*“I think the project helped me to care more”*

**ITALY** – Four of the Italian respondents helped to develop and implement proposals for the competition while the other 3 were involved in implementing the ideas. While several of the respondents stated that they did not receive useful support by the project coordinators, one respondent said;

*“The support we have had has been very useful. I’d say essential, even fundamental. Without their help we wouldn’t have been able to carry out the project, specially the bureaucratic part”*

All but one of the Italian young people felt that their participation in the project was a worthwhile experience. The following comments illustrate the value that most of the respondents attached to their participation in the project;

*“It gave me the opportunity to be part of a festival organized in my neighbourhood, with many activities useful to create a renewed ‘atmosphere’ of community in a public garden”*

*“I had the possibilities to share a documentary about my neighbourhood in a square of the town with a public projection, participated and lead shows and workshops in a public garden”*

*“The project has been very important. It has opened four eyes instead of two. It has made us understand how beautiful but difficult it is to organize something among so much reality and how many opportunities to collaborate there are if one wants to. We hope we’ll have other opportunities in the future where we can show our ideas”*

The majority of Italian respondents also indicated that the project was useful for their neighbourhood. In particular, they noted that the project had benefited many people and two young people said;

*“More than just for the neighbourhood, for the whole city”*

*“Many, many people join us, mostly in the shows! There has been hundreds of happy people in the garden during the activities”*

All of the respondents except one felt that the project had produced good ideas and that they had become more involved in their neighbourhood. The young person who dissented from the general view commented;

*“In the beginning I thought it would, but I’m not sure about the realisation”*

However, another respondent said;

*“I met many people who were interested in arts, theatre, activities together”*

Two others said the project also helped them to become more involved in the neighbourhood;

*“Participating and collaborating to such community events, with different artistic expression form, creating a ‘date’ every year, in which people can gather to live together this experience”*

*“it has awakened many realities that were asleep before”*

One young woman said that she found it helpful but also said;

*“I think yes, but it’s only the start because I think that only carrying on this project would we really get involved in our neighbourhood”*

**SPAIN** - All of the Spanish respondents were involved in developing a proposal for the competition – 4 developed a radio project and 4 developed a volunteer project. While the young people involved with the radio project felt that they had received useful support from the coordinators, those from the radio project stated that they did not.

Both groups of respondents reported that their participation in the project had been a worthwhile experience, commenting;

*“Yes because we had to develop the role of youth worker or educator and this has enabled us to better understand the work and effort involved in holding a workshop”*

*“Yes, the project allowed us to know another city and others associations and how they work in different place and methodology”*

Asked if they felt the project was useful for their neighbourhood, one group said;

*“Yes because we have learned things that we can use in our associations and we have made contacts for other projects”*

This group also felt that the project helped them to become more involved in their neighbourhood, stating;

*“Yes because we met more people of the neighbourhood, which has enabled us to expand our social network”*

However, the other group were not so positive about the question of impact on neighbourhood, indicating that;

*“We believe it was useful for the participants”*

This group did not feel that the project helped them to become more involved in their neighbourhood.

**SWEDEN** - Three of the young people from Sweden were actively involved in developing a proposal for the competition while the remaining five were participants in the project activities. All of the respondents indicated that they received useful support from the project coordinators, saying;

*“Yes, information about everything”*

*“Yes, they give us help and security”*

Similarly, all the Swedish respondents said that their experience in the project was worthwhile and that it was beneficial to their neighbourhood. All of the comments reflected the sentiments stated in the following comments;

*“It’s always good to have a new experience” – “We can be better”*

*“Yes, the youths must have something to do and be outside the problems”*

*“Yes, the youths in the neighbourhood need activities”*

There was unanimous agreement among the young people that the project had produced good ideas and all except one young man felt that the project had enabled them to become more involved in their neighbourhood. One young person said;

*“We show that we have talent”*

Another stated;

*We can do better events and activities”*

Finally, one felt that he had met a lot of young people and said;

*“Maybe can do some big thing in the future”*

## **Project Outcomes**

**GREECE** – Responses from the young people in Greece show that they all felt that the Open Door Project has achieved a number of aims. For some young people, the aim of integrating, engaging and adding value to their community was realised. One of the respondents said;

*“We became more social, we learned how to cooperate with each other and managed to achieve our aim. Also, we became more sensitive with people and the problems they face”*

Other young people commented that the project;

*“Achieved the cooperation between children from different worlds”*

*“It managed to gather people from my neighbourhood in order to work for a common target”*

The overall success of the project was evident in many of the comments made by the young people and apart from suggesting that there should have been more publicity about the project so that more people could have been involved, there were no indications that the project should have done things differently. Indeed, asked about the long-term impact on themselves and their neighbourhood, the majority of the Greek respondents enthusiastically endorsed the project;

*“It was an unforgettable experience. I enjoyed it with my heart and soul!”*

*“It learnt me many things about a better life!”*

*“It was wonderful. We feel that at this time we know better how to help us and other people also make anybody happier”*

*“I will become more aware of what teenagers can do with their ideas if they are correctly motivated”*

*“Young people might finally realise that their ideas might be beneficial for everybody”*

The only slightly negative aspect of their experience was that the money for the implementation of the winning ideas was not provided early in the project. For one group of young musicians this proved problematic, saying;

*“We are waiting for the budget to arrive, so we have to sustain the recording... We don't have done any moves yet. We don't have the money to record!”*

**ITALY** – Only one young person in the Italian group appears to have had a more negative experience than the other young people. He stated that he did not feel that the project achieved its aims and that it did not achieve what he wanted it to achieve, saying;

*“Unluckily I think it did not, because not enough people took part to it”*

However, this young man's view was not shared by the other Italian respondents who felt that the project was very successful and that it produced positive results. One young woman said that it was *“a good opportunity for young people and the town”* and two respondents said that;

*“it's been possible to join various projects, give life on different occasions to places that weren't alive or visited, it has made people know how great it is to participate in the events organized by the neighbourhood and it has led to understand that it's possible to get to organize and give life to interesting things with the help of different organizations and collaborations and it has made Arcella neighbourhood better both on a human level and on a cognitive level, also for the future”*

*“...without the project it would have been impossible to propose such activities for free to the neighbourhood”*

Another young woman suggested;

*“It's a first step, but it's good if it can go on. People wants more happening like this, to go out from home and meet with others, families, children, young people”*

While few of the respondents indicated that there had been any unexpected outcomes, there was one notable exception. This particular young woman expressed her happiness, saying;

*“In the garden that we organised the activities we met some not Italian children that all day use to meet there to play together. So we are very excited to had involved them in our theatrical activities and plays”*

Most of the Italian respondents reported that they would not have done things differently and there was a clear sense among them that they wished to see the work of the project continuing in the long-term, both for themselves and for their neighbourhood. The following comments capture some of the strength of feeling about the need to continue this kind of activity.

*“the **Open Door** project, as it’s name says, is still open and we want it to continue that way so that we can carry on making ourselves and the others better”*

*“There is no long term impact without repetition, sustaining. People were happy for the activities, a garden ‘changed’ face for some weeks, but it is only a ‘happy spot’ if it is not renewed, gathering every year more and more people and activities and transforming the event in a ‘habit’, something the neighbourhood needs and asks for is social and cultural function”*

**SPAIN** - All of the Spanish respondents felt that the Open Door Project achieved its aims, though 4 of them qualified this, stating;

*“In part, because we believe that the impact has been small because the group was small, but we do believe that for a next edition, we could reach more people, which would impact very positively to the neighbourhood”*

Asked if the project had achieved what they wanted to achieve, 4 respondents in one group said;

*“Yes because how we have said before, it has enabled us to meet more people and the receivers were aware of an appeal of the neighbourhood”*

The other 4 respondents were slightly less-satisfied on this matter, stating

*“More or less, there has been less participation than we thought”*

All of the respondents indicated that there had been unexpected outcomes from the project. For one group this had been because they learned about personal work in free time activities and the integration methodology that was used with the young people. For the other group this was because one young person had unexpectedly become closely bound into the group.

One of the groups of respondents said that they would have done things differently by focusing their effort more specifically;

*“we could have followed the work of only one association during more time or we could travel farther”*

In terms of the long-term impact of the project, the respondents said that the impact for them had been;

*“We have met a new place and new methodologies adapted to other realities”*

*“We have understood better the work involved in practicing as youth worker/educator, which has been useful to appreciate this work”*

One group did not feel that the project was likely to make a long-term impact on their community, but they indicated that there was a possibility of a more significant impact, stating;

*“... maybe if we can develop a project with the people who we have met these days”*

The other group of 4 respondents expressed satisfaction with their experience, saying;

*“We guess receivers have known a place where they can express their opinion and talk about important things that matter to them and the*

*neighborhood. It has supposed to know the opinion of some young people”*

**SWEDEN** – All of the young people in Sweden felt that the Open Door Project had achieved its aims and all except one of them felt that they had also achieved their personal aims. One young man expressed the sense of achievement felt by many, saying;

*“All the people have good times ... and we can do things”*

Two young people indicated that there had been additional outcomes from the project with both indicating that the project could be extended into other areas, saying;

*“I have a question to work in the municipality with this idea”*

*“I think we could do activities in other neighbourhoods in Vaxjo”*

Thinking of the long-term impact of the project on themselves and on their neighbourhoods, the young people reported a number of positive features. The majority felt that the foundations had been laid to do more activities in their neighbourhood in future and so regarded the Open Door Project as a helpful catalyst.

At the personal level, most of the young people indicated that the good experience of being involved in the project had encouraged their desire to be more involved in neighbourhood actions and to have more contact with other young people. One young man said that he welcomed *“the possibility to be a pioneer”* and that he hoped for *“New possibilities to some new projects”*. Another young man said, *“it was fun...the youths can do more things”*.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

This evaluation set out to determine whether the Open Door Project had met its general objective to provide an opportunity for a group of professional people belonging to Public Bodies and Youth NGOs to work together through the activation of concrete actions involving young people, exchange of good practices and commencement of a long term cooperation process within the context of non formal education.

The evaluation also sought to examine the underlying specific objectives including, promoting integration between professionals; promoting inclusion and participation of young people in designing, planning and delivering services/activities for young people; and identifying innovative methods to engage and reach young people living in suburban areas.

**Key Finding - Promoting integration between professionals.**

The evidence provided by the project coordinator and local partners suggests that one of the most important aspects of the Open Door project was the level of collaboration and integration among Public Bodies and NGOs. As stated elsewhere in the project report, Public Bodies and Youth NGOs worked together both at international level (during the meetings in Venice, Madrid and Brussels) and at local level in order to define the framework, principles and general operation of the project in each of the partner countries.

The importance of good communication and the distribution of responsibilities among the partners facilitated the work of all the agencies involved. The idea of a cross-national partnership within the context of an established network (ENSA) appears to have enhanced the project and made it more attractive for participants and stakeholders.

Collaboration among NGO's and Public Bodies helped to deliver the outcomes of the project on all levels. Close working links improved the work of both sectors thanks to the exchange of information and the mutual knowledge of each other's reality. This collaborative process contributed to enhance and facilitate the development of ideas proposed by young people and also the delivery of the successful proposals in each country.

The project has clearly laid the foundations for the commencement of a long term cooperation process, but as many young people indicated in their feedback, it will be necessary to support and sustain this over time in order to fulfil this objective.

**Key Finding - Promoting inclusion and participation of young people in designing, planning and delivering services/activities for young people.**

The data obtained show that young people in each of the partner countries have been highly motivated in the development and delivery of projects and ideas that they have proposed. However, it is also clear that the initial phase of engaging with young people can be problematic and the use of methods such as help-desks can have varied results.

The evidence suggests that young people who participate in youth groups or associations are more active than people who don't participate. Organized youth groups appear better placed to participate so the task of youth workers is very important particularly in information dissemination and logistical support in the development of proposals/ideas. Clearly, the provision of financial help is also necessary.

The data obtained from the young people's questionnaires shows that the local projects had some success in including young people with fewer opportunities. The Swedish responses, for example, show that there were a significant number of immigrant youth involved in their projects. The Greek returns show that a substantial minority there had disabilities or experienced social disadvantages. The scope to encourage participation by excluded groups was therefore exploited to a degree by the Open Door project but this is an area where further work could be done. Support for young people, especially those with fewer opportunities, requires youth workers who can motivate young people and help them to overcome obstacles and difficulties which obstruct their participation in the implementation of the initiatives such as resources, language and cultural differences.

**Key Finding - Identifying innovative methods to engage and reach young people living in suburban areas.**

Engaging with excluded or disaffected young people is one of the most problematic issues for many societies. Experience in the Open Door project suggests that dissemination of information in places where the young people routinely spend their

time and in youth centres/organizations seems to have helped to develop an effective communication system. Attractive and well-designed posters also helped to improve the delivery of information to young people, as did the use of the internet, although the latter was on a very limited level.

On the evidence of the feedback from young people it is apparent that the most effective form of communication about the project was ‘word of mouth’, with young people learning about the projects primarily through friends. The participation of youth is often focused on themes and interests which they have previously held but their motivation to develop their own ideas is not enough without resources and youth workers to improve this motivation. Moreover, it seems that introducing a reward or a prize for their effort acts as a useful incentive to engage and reach these young people.

The long term impact of the Open Door project depends on a number of factors. The experience of the partners and young people suggests that involvement of the local organizations and youth groups in their neighbourhoods has been key to achieving the aims of the projects. These local groups and organisations work directly with disadvantaged young people and have complemented the work undertaken by the public bodies and NGOs in the project. It is vital that ongoing work in this field continues to harness the participation and collaboration of these local groups. It is clear that the young people who participated in the Open Door project valued their experience and wish to see this initiative sustained. As one young person says;

*“Everything is possible, one just has to want it”*

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Project Evaluation**

**Process** - Project Organisation  
Project Meetings

Project Management  
Project Communication  
Project Methods (eg focus groups; help desks;  
publicity materials)

**Outcomes** - Aims and Objectives (Project-Wide/Local)

Organise Competition  
Select and Implement good ideas  
Promote Youth Participation  
Train Youth Leaders/Peer Leaders  
Positive Impact on Neighbourhood

**Methods** - Quantitative and Qualitative

*Quantitative* - Need to develop schedules to record:

- How many people involved in organisation and delivery of project? (including selection committees; focus groups; trainers)
- How many young people involved in developing project ideas?
- How many project ideas?
- How many young people trained as youth/peer support leaders?
- How many young people involved in implementing project ideas?
- How many young people benefiting from projects?

*Qualitative* - Primary method – Questionnaires  
(Interviews not practical)

Young People involved in submitting ideas  
Young People involved in implementing ideas

Young People who benefit from ideas

## **Development of Theory/Knowledge**

What are the key findings?

What are the central themes?

How does the project help us to understand:

- How to run a cross-national project?
- How to communicate effectively with young people in disadvantaged areas?
- How to train youth/peer leaders?
- How to promote participation?
- How to support young people to implement local initiatives?
- How to measure impact of initiatives on local areas?

## **Implications for Policy and Practice**

➤ Local/Regional Level

➤ European Level

**APPENDIX 2**

**The Open Door Project**  
**Questionnaire - Young People**

**City/Region** .....

**• SECTION ONE: GENERAL DETAILS**

**1. Young Person's Name** .....

**2. Date of Birth** .....

**3. Age** .....

**4. Gender** (*please tick the correct box*)

Male

Female

**5. Please state your Ethnic Origin**  
(*e.g. White European; Asian; etc.*)

6. **Do you have any disabilities?**  
*(describe the disability)*

• **SECTION TWO: PROJECT INFORMATION**

7. **How did you learn about the Open Door Project in your neighbourhood?**  
(e.g. Poster; Leaflet; Youth Worker; Word of Mouth; etc)

8. **Were the aims of the Project clear?**

9. **Was the information you received about the Project helpful?**

10. **Is there anything you would have done to improve the information about the Project?**

• **SECTION THREE: PARTICIPATION**



• **SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES**

- 17. In your opinion, has the Open Door Project achieved its aims and objectives? (Please explain)**
- 18. Did the Open Door Project achieve what you wanted it to achieve? (Please explain)**
- 19. Were there any unexpected outcomes? (If yes, what were they?)**
- 20. Is there anything you would have done differently? (If yes, what?)**
- 21. What do you think the long term impact of the Project is likely to be?**
- a) For you?
- b) For your neighbourhood?



**OPEN DOOR PROJECT**

