



Synthesis Report

Reactions to the "Memorandum on Lifelong Learning" by Member Organisations of the European Youth Forum

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This document is not a policy statement of the European Youth Forum, nor does it necessarily reflect the positions of the European Youth Forum or its Member Organisations.

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Organisations whose input has been incorporated in this report:

ACC - Association for Community Colleges

AEGEE Europe – Association des Etats généraux des étudiants en Europe

Allianssi – Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi

ECYC – European Confederation of Youth Clubs

EEE-YFU – European Education Exchanges – Youth for Understanding

EFIL – European Federation for Intercultural Learning

JECI-MIEC – Jeunesse étudiante chrétienne internationale - Mouvement international des Etudiants Catholiques

NYCI – national Youth Council of Ireland

OBESSU – Organising Bureau of European School Students Unions

VSK- Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel

(through VPIJ, the Flemish Platform for international youthwork)

YEPP – Youth of the European People's Party

The Memorandum was also discussed in a work-shop that took place at the Youth Forum's "EU Affairs Commission" in Upsala (Sweden), 27-28 April 2001. Feedback there has equally been incorporated in this report.

Introduction

During the European Year of Lifelong Learning the Youth Forum undertook a survey on lifelong learning amongst youth NGO's. The study, which was carried out by researchers of the *Vrije Universiteit Brussel* in co-operation with the Youth Forum¹, aimed to find out to what extent youth organisations were familiar with the concept of Lifelong Learning propagated by the European Commission during the year and how aware youth organisations are of their proper potential and impact as educators of young people. The study revealed that "while [those active as leaders or professionals in youth NGO's] believe they fulfil an educational role towards young people, they sense a lack of recognition of their work and value as educational agents by society in general and decision-makers in particular." The study also showed that youth organisations felt that the access to lifelong learning was unequal ("mainly because of information provided to young people") and that little of them had actively participated in projects and events in the frame of the European Year of Lifelong Learning. Another finding was that while youth organisations feel they have an educating role through their activities towards their constituencies, few were conscious of the (job) training role they play in regards to those that work voluntarily (part or full-time, short-term or long-term) in secretariats of NGO's or in bodies such as the board of a youth NGO.

Concurrently with the results of the survey, the Youth Forum intensified its efforts to promote non-formal education and subsequently has been a fervent advocate for the recognition of non-formal education as it is provided by youth organisations. Its work in this respect was very much influenced and stimulated by efforts previously undertaken by several of its Member Organisations.² By the end of 1997 the European Youth Forum adopted the policy "Non-formal Education - A priority for the youth movement", which stated that "Education is a lifelong learning process (...) [and a] global concept that includes informal, formal and non-formal aspects."³ The policy stated that "the formal

1 Lifelong Learning – A Youth Perspective (Brussels December 1997). The study was supported by DG XXII of the European Commission. It is available at our website:
<http://www.youthforum.org/spb/beliefs/index.htm>

2 namely "The Education of Young People - a statement at the dawn of the 21st Century" jointly published by the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, World Young Women's Christian Association, World Organisation of the Scout Movement, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Award Association. See e.g.
<http://www.intaward.org/participant/links.htm>

3 EDUCOM D97-669. The document defined these three realms of education the following way: "Informal Education is the learning process that goes on in daily life. The educational agents that usually take part in

traditional educational systems [alone] cannot respond" sufficiently to the challenges which our societies are facing and that therefore "other actors must be asked to intervene and [they must be] recognised for their own independent relevance (...)".

The European Youth Forum therefore very much welcomed the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning of the European Commission⁴ for its wider concept of learning and its recognition of learning providers outside of the formal education system. The Youth Forum was also involved in and contributing to the consultation of NGO's that took place prior to the publication of the Memorandum.

Following the publication of the Memorandum and in view to drafting an Action Plan on Lifelong Learning, DG Education and Culture of the European Commission invited the Youth Forum to associate itself with a platform of European NGO's. This platform⁵ was supposed to facilitate the consultation of NGO's in Europe, working in the field of education in its broadest sense. The platform has concluded a project agreement with the European Commission, enabling it to conduct a consultation of the respective Member Organisations of each of the umbrella organisations and to employ experts to monitor and report on the results of these consultations. Due to the funding situation of the European Youth Forum (namely the obligation to raise funding from non-Community sources), it was not possible for us to be a partner in this project agreement. Nevertheless, seen the importance of the Memorandum and the vital contribution that non-formal education should play in lifelong learning, we (and correspondingly the partners of the platform) have agreed to participate in the consultation process as an associated member of the NGO platform.

this process are mainly parents, peers or friends and the individual himself/herself through his/her personal interests and experiences to know more about his/her surrounding environment. Formal Education 'is the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded, educational system running from primary to tertiary institutions'. Schools and Universities are the main educational actors in this process. Non-formal education corresponds to a collection of teaching tools and learning schemes that are seen as creative and innovative alternatives to traditional and classical teaching systems where, via personal interaction and flexibility in problem's approach and solution, young people can discuss matters of relevance to their lives as citizens in society and integrate knowledge. A variety of agents take part in this process."

4 "A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning – A Commission Staff Working Document", Brussels 30.10.2000, SEC (2000) 1832

5 The platform consists of: Corporate Social Responsibility Europe (CSR Europe), European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EfVET), European Universities Association (EUA), Solidar/The Platform of Social NGO's and the European Youth Forum as an associated member

Obviously this meant that the consultation of the Youth Forum's Member Organisations had to be conducted in parallel to other ongoing projects and obligations and under considerable time pressure. The consultation was mainly conducted in the form of a written questionnaire. This questionnaire was very much based on the model provided by the European Commission for this purpose, if somewhat amended according to the relevance for youth organisations. Probably because Member Organisations were given relatively short time to complete the questionnaire during an anyway busy time of the year, the return rate was not entirely satisfactory. In total twelve organisations replied (see p. 3). Of course there are also more general reasons for this: Not all Member Organisations see education policy and/or EU policy as one of their prime concerns. This is particularly true for National Youth Councils in non-EU countries. Secondly many of the international youth organisations have very scarce resources in terms of staff and time, which may mean that they have to prioritise their resources to ongoing activities and cannot devote as much time to more abstract and policy oriented issues as they would like.

All of this said, the contributions that were submitted are generally well reflecting the positions that most of the Member Organisations of the Youth Forum stand for on these kind of issues, if any such generalization is allowed. In that sense they are representative. They are not representative for the Youth Forum in a stricter political sense. **It is important to stress that this synthesis report is a collation of individual organisations contributions and not a collective statement of the European Youth Forum.** It has not been endorsed by any statutory body of the European Youth Forum at this point. Notwithstanding this, the consultation will probably be useful for the further policy development of the Youth Forum as a platform, and it was useful to bring to the fore the various opinions in the membership of our organisation. One of the short-comings of the consultation as it was conducted was that it was not very successful in *systematically* identifying good practice⁶. The Youth Forum may therefore consider to tackle this issue separately and systematically in the near future.

Prior to the consultation by questionnaire, a workshop on the Memorandum was held at one of the standing committees of the Youth Forum, the so-called "European Union Affairs Commission". The results of this workshop have also been incorporated into the report. The report is structured along the Key Messages of the Memorandum.

⁶ For example, often replies were consisting in simply enumerating names of projects without any detailed information, or merely indicating internet addresses where such information could be found.

1. Key Message 1: New Basic Skills for all

Key Message 1 has by far provoked the most substantial reactions. Most organisations agreed that the "new basic skills" quoted in the memorandum were of relevance in today's society and economy and therefore for educational policy. One organisation said that the definition given in the Memorandum (drawing on the Lisbon summit conclusions) was "satisfactory and complete".⁷

However, some organisations criticized the angle of the question as it was put in the questionnaire: It started from the – perceived – need of the labour market, rather than from the (skills) needs of the human being. The opposite approach would first ask: what skills are "required, as a person with a coherent sense of identity and direction in life, for active participation in a democracy, in the knowledge society and economy – in the labour market and at work (...)." ⁸ This would consequently - while not neglecting the other "new basic skills" - put more emphasis on the social and "generic skills". These were considered fundamental to all learning and to the use of skills, insofar as making use of skills (in the labour market or as a citizen) always is embedded in a community/societal context.

It was also stated that "while Active Citizenship is noted as an equal aim for lifelong learning, an inherent weakness of the document is that it fails to explore how this can be achieved as much as it advocates the need for transferable and marketable labour skills."⁹ Thus Lifewide and Lifelong Learning policies need also to create and promote learning environments where "individuals can integrate, understand and learn from each other".¹⁰

Several organisations stressed the relevance of skills that are not explicitly mentioned in the Memorandum nor in the Lisbon Council Conclusions:

- One of them is related to the vast amount of information in the knowledge society that people have to cope with, it could be summarised under the term *information management*, which would include both the aptitude to discern and filter (useful from useless, reliable from unreliable) information, to comprehend its full meaning, to synthesise and extrapolate and to draw appropriate conclusions from it.

7 Contribution of YEPP (all acronyms of Member Organisations are spelled out on page 3)

8 Contribution of JECI-MIEC

9 Contribution of the NYCI

10 *ibid*

- The second set of "new skills" would be *communication skills*, which would not be limited – but encompass – *ICTechnologies* skills, thus this is a pledge for a more integrative and comprehensive concept.

It is noted in one contribution that while communication is not a new phenomena – and therefore mastering it is not really a new competency neither – the quantity and relevance of communication has dramatically increased.¹¹ As both above described (concepts of) skills are rather similar they could also be subsumed as *information and communication* skills.

In regard to language skills, several organisations¹² underlined that the pure knowledge of a language is not sufficient in so far as it needs to be combined with intercultural awareness and skills. A strategy for Lifelong and Lifewide Learning should therefore integrate (experiential) approaches of intercultural learning (ICL), thereby drawing on the experience of the EU mobility programmes and of non-formal education in general. ICL should also be integrated systematically into language teaching curricula, and it should be noted that this would mean much more than just introducing elements on the arts and customs of a country where a respective language is spoken.¹³

One organisation questioned whether "technological culture" could be defined as a skill,¹⁴ as it is the case in the Memorandum. Most organisations stressed that special emphasis should be given to *social skills* within a Lifewide and Lifelong Learning framework policy. In that context, it was underlined that social skills are also very much appreciated and necessary on the labour market: "Employers and others often comment on the fact that academic or 'hard' skills are not enough, that most valuable employees are those with a broad range of skills, such as communication, problem solving, team work etc. It is vital that these are emphasised within the lifelong learning agenda(...)".¹⁵ It

11 Contribution of AEGEE

12 in particular EEE-YFU and AEGEE

13 The language courses that the Council of Europe's European Youth Centre offered for young people active in youth NGO's (which were abolished as of 2001 for budgetary reasons) can be considered as good practice. For more on this and the integration of ICL into language course curricula cf. "Learning a Language Differently", Council of Europe 1997.

14 Contribution of EFIL

15 Contribution of ECYC, This claim is substantiated e.g. by a study undertaken by Andersen Consulting in 1998, which was looking into "what employers in the UK are looking for in the young people they recruit today, and what it is that makes a young person succeed or fail when trying to step onto the employment ladder." (Attributes of Youth – Young people, education and employability, Andersen Consulting 1998)

was also emphasised that the foundations for social and other "soft" skills are "best developed at an early age with teenagers and strengthened throughout life through opportunities for continual learning".¹⁶ Thus "lifelong learning does not begin when one is 25 years old and end at 64".¹⁷

On the question regarding the overload of school and college curricula and the "ceaseless demands to incorporate new content and new skills" Member Organisations of the Youth Forum expressed that they considered this to be an accurate and realistic assessment. Most organisations stressed, in one way or another, that giving more support to and increasing recognition of non-formal providers (and learning outcomes) would ease the burden of schools. "Schooling systems and higher education centres are not/cannot cover all people's needs"¹⁸, and "much of what is taught in schools and colleges would be better and more effectively learned in non-formal settings".¹⁹

In the contribution from the Flemish school students platform it was suggested that more appreciation should be given for youth work, e.g. by schools promoting voluntary work ("different voluntary initiatives come and present themselves during a schoolday").

While the school remains an important provider of education, lifelong and lifewide learning will only become a reality if policy makers go beyond looking at the formal providers and if formal education institutions look beyond the limits of their institution and take an integrative approach to education. "Lifelong/lifewide learning is not just about the school setting, it should encompass a variety of institutions (such as community organisations, youth groups) and [it] should recognise the work of youth programmes in out-of-school settings and strive to create a working structure that is accessible to all."²⁰ Another Member Organisation expressed that there was also a need for more focus on quality versus quantity and the need to "focus on developing soft skills such as adaptability, flexibility, communication and intercultural competencies. In a fast changing environment, organisation and content of curricula must focus on readiness and ability to change."²¹ Thus a shift towards experiential learning was widely recommended in order to avoid overburdening school curricula and increase quality - be it by giving more room to

16 Contribution of EEE-YFU

17 Contribution of NYCI

18 JECI-MIEC

19 ECYC

20 NYCI

21 EEE-YFU

learning outside of the formal systems, by integrating non-formal and experiential forms into the schools curricula or by combining both. One organisation also recommended that schools should have greater autonomy in defining how to impart the skills through their curricula.²²

In principle there was a wide support for the development of a *common EU framework* regarding the new basic skills (with one exception²³). Of course the support for this framework needs to be seen in the context of the statements regarding the definition of the "new basic skills" above, e.g. "participation and democracy skills should be included in an EU-framework of basic skills"²⁴ and it should include "both non-formal and formal acquisition of skills"²⁵. One organisation expressed the need for a thorough consultation on what should be included in the framework and how, and that this consultation should be a separate process from the one on the Memorandum. There was a consensus that any framework to be developed would need to be flexible and allow for a considerable diversity, supporting the plurality of European nations.

Along those lines, the framework should be on the one side a minimum standard setting instrument, ensuring the right to acquire the basic skills, and on the other hand focus on the promotion and valorisation of the process of (lifelong and lifewide) learning, and it should prioritise the provision of skills that empower the individual to develop such a learning process in a successful way.

All organisations supported the *idea of a right for all citizens "to acquire and update skills through lifelong learning"* as a fundamental principle for an inclusive and democratic society. It was noted however, that in reality the funding currently available for lifewide and lifelong learning is not sufficient to "materialise" this right in reality on an equal and qualitative basis. One organisation, described such a right as "one of [its] basic tenants" underlining however the difference "between making this a right that is available to all, and forcing young people and others to take part", which would not be supported.²⁶

22 YEPP

23 AEGEE stated that fostering skills should follow "regional" needs, e.g. "in Eastern countries (...) more entrepreneurial skills [need to be promoted], while in Western countries more attention should be given to technological culture skills".

24 Allianssi

25 EFIL

26 ECYC

For achieving the aim of reducing drop-out rates of the school systems, Member Organisations stressed the need to overhaul the system in a way that puts the learner at the centre. Schools should be devised in a way that takes the school students needs as a starting point and which makes attending it more attractive. In that respect one could argue that schools should learn from voluntary youth work, which generally sets a good example for a participatory approach to education, and where instructors are "more coaches than teachers"²⁷, and where learners have a greater say in *how* they learn and *what* they learn.

Thus in non-formal education the learning process is (perceived) so different from formal schooling that often it is not directly equated with learning by the learners themselves immediately. This is of course because our image of what learning is about. is still very much shaped by our experience of the formal system.²⁸ Notwithstanding this, the non-formal learning experience helps people to *learn to learn* in a natural process through a learning-by-doing approach (i.e. experiential learning). It stimulates their curiosity, their desire to learn, to improve their skills and to develop their personality.

There are also many documented cases in the *Youth for Europe* and *European Voluntary Service programmes* where non-formal learning has stimulated the desire to re-engage in formal learning in young people which previously had negative (failure) experience within formal schooling²⁹. Thus, non-formal education could provide a tool to reduce school drop-out rates and to reintegrate early school leavers into lifelong learning, provided that adequate funding was made available and if more support would be channelled to quality assurance, documentation and exchange of good practice as well as research.

It was also suggested that "modulisation" of the school curricula (and certification) systems would allow easier reintegration into education (as a "second chance") and enhance lifelong learning generally.

27 Flemish school students platform

28 Often awareness for the learning process only comes about once reflection upon the process is stimulated by the trainer.

29 One such example, the Step by Step project under EVS, will be documented by the European Youth Forum in co-operation with the project and the Association of Voluntary Service Organisation (AVSO) later this year.

Key Message 2: More Investment in Human Resources

Generally speaking, Member Organisations commented that Key Message 2 and the questions related to it were too much labour market oriented and that they were more addressed to policy makers and employers than to (youth) NGO's.

It was pointed out that investment in human resources and equipment should take into account the variety of learning providers. For example it was argued that "non-formal education providers, such as youth organisations and services, need up-to-date ICT equipment that can be accessed by all, for example in Youth Information Centres. Furthermore, families and individuals should be able to purchase ICT equipment through grant schemes under the European Social Fund in recognition of the fact that lifelong learning can be family-based as well as community-based or company based."³⁰

It was expressed that public policy and employers should support study besides work or in between jobs, inter alia in the form of sabbatical leaves. Good practice in terms of (national) legislation and practice of employers should be made available on European level.³¹

The concept of corporate scholarships was mentioned. Member State and European level recognition of such programmes would be welcomed. Tax incentives should be given both for individuals engaging (and investing) in lifewide and lifelong learning and corporate funders, but also for companies supporting lifewide and lifelong learning (the concept of *lifewide* learning would imply here that not only continued training should be supported but also corporate citizenship). Public and private support should be given to projects for developing and implementing good practice in volunteer management and training. In that respect it was also mentioned that good practice in this regard is undervalued i.e. should be better highlighted on all levels. One organisation especially mentioned that private co-funding of schools should be promoted, not the least because it would improve the co-operation of educational institutions and the private sector inter alia, in regard to the development of labour market skills.³²

30 NYCI

31 Alliansi, pointed out that it saw the practise in Finland as a good example, where "it is quite common that a person takes a break from the working life for 3 months – 1 year. This as well as personal training is often supported by the employer also financially".

32 YEPP

In terms of research, it was encouraged to undertake studies that would examine the link between early learning experiences and practice on the one, and participation and achievement in lifelong learning at later stages of life on the other side. It was underlined that such research would be a long term endeavour and should include longitudinal research because the outcome of learning processes and their effects on the individual are often not immediate. Research should examine the impact of lifewide and lifelong learning on society as a whole (e.g. its cohesion, sustainability of the democratic system, etc.)³³ and not just its economic value.

Youth research should also be integrated when undertaking research on lifelong learning and its benefits. While "NGO's have commendable practices, we often lack the appropriate resources to highlight the success of these. Because we function as service organisations to sometimes neglected parts of the population most in need of lifelong learning opportunities, we have little time and resources left to promote wider use of our practices through research findings etc."³⁴ In view to clarifying the social and economic benefits of investing in lifelong learning the same organisation mentioned that this would require a continuous assessment of skills and their impact on the "social scoreboard" of a country. In the light of the "wealth of information and tools that already exist, we see a particular role for governments to provide funding for researching and bringing together this know-how."³⁵

33 The recent OECD publication "The well-being of nations – The Role of Human and Social Capital" could lead the way to further research in this sense.

34 EFIL

35 ibid

Key Message 3: Innovation in Teaching and Learning

Regarding Key Message 3 of the Memorandum, Member Organisations of the Youth Forum expressed the belief that formal education providers could learn from youth organisations. "Due to the fact that we are less likely to have an audience who have to be there, we must make our programmes more interesting and relevant."³⁶ This was also supported by the National Youth Council of Ireland, which wrote that the "skills and methodologies used in youth work not only stand on its own two feet as a valid learning process but also offer good practice to formal education processes."

The statement "that training courses and qualifications for education and training practitioners working in non-formal sectors (...) are underdeveloped everywhere in Europe" expressed in the Memorandum was not totally shared. "There is a lot of good quality training available for youth workers and to others involved in lifelong learning. However, it is often the practical issues, which make it difficult for people to access these, including the cost of travel and /or training itself, the length of time involved and the need to balance this with other needs. More resources need to be made available to youth organisations in order to support the uptake of training opportunities. (...) Much work is already being done to combine the needs and issues of IT with good practice in non-formal learning, especially in regard to providing services to socially excluded young people. It is important not to recreate the wheel here, but instead to look to what is already happening, and then to what else needs to be done."³⁷

It was widely acknowledged that (further) research would be useful, e.g. the training priorities of those who work in the non-formal sector (youth and community work, adult education) should be explored in order to better appreciate their needs³⁸, and to further improve quality and develop methodologies. In that respect it might be useful to open up possibilities for the support of Action Research³⁹ in all of the programmes of DG EAC (or

36 ECYC

37 *ibid*; the ECYC has recently released a report on youth worker training in Europe and the relevance of European wide standards, modules etc.; copies are available from: ECYC, Ornevej 45, Copenhagen 2400 NV, Denmark, E-Mail ecydk@centrum.dk

38 NYCI

39 Action Research is a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by practitioners (youth workers, social workers, teachers and trainers etc.), analysing their own work, aiming to improve its quality and rationality. It is often undertaken in teams of (educational) practitioners and sometimes in co-operation with outsiders. For references cf. http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc/act_res.html

the Joint Actions of these) and/or in the forthcoming research framework programme. Results and outcomes of such projects should be widely publicised on all levels in order to promote the concept of Action Research, thus improving educational practice on a larger scale.

As desirable priorities of research were also mentioned:

- Open and Distance Learning,
- Community Colleges or peoples' academies (and their possible development on a European scale),
- "learning to learn", self-learning,
- ICT education,
- accreditation and recognition of non-formal learning.

Key Message 4: Valuing Learning

Generally speaking, the answers given by Member Organisations to the questions regarding Key Message 4 were very similar to those for Key Message 1, in many cases also referring to the answers given there.

As to the question what kind of systems could be developed to recognise competencies gained in non-formal and informal contexts, it was suggested to start by setting up a guideline catalogue of competencies and skills that can be gained in these contexts. These guidelines should then identify tools which have proved to enhance these skills (good practice). Such a catalogue of competencies and tools could "raise awareness (...) inside organisations dealing with non-formal education and towards others."⁴⁰

It was also pointed out that - as far as certification is concerned - it is important to clearly identify tasks and activities that exist in a given non-formal learning opportunity. This ought to be taken into account in developing the European CV and refining certificates such as the one for EVS.

Information on the various self-assessment and APEL tools need to be publicised in a easily accessible format, since only if they become widely known will they further the recognition of non-formal learning. This implies that a certain streamlining and consolidation of the different projects and tools for certification and accreditation is needed. In doing so, it needs to be avoided however, to actually streamline and overly regulate (and thereby formalise) the various non-formal learning opportunities themselves. Any consolidated assessment and accreditation scheme needs to be flexible, adaptable and applicable to a wide range of learning experiences.

Also it would be important that any accreditation system or initiative should not only aim to recognise primarily labour market oriented (technical) skills but also those of cultural and social value,⁴¹ even though it was added that employers are looking for soft skills, orientations and attitudes that can (probably best) be imparted by non-formal education⁴².

40 AEGEE

41 ibid

42 AEGEE quoted that German employers were looking for the following: "Internationality', loyalty, team spirit, mobility, goal orientation, flexibility

Some organisation expressed scepticism as to whether it would be possible to establish greater recognition of non-formal learning across Europe as long as education largely remains a Member State remit⁴³. This scepticism was reinforced by the diverse nature of non-formal learning schemes and providers. "The inner value of non-formal education consist in its diversity and its flexibility to adapt to different contexts. Standardising its recognition would spoil this core value and will make the system useless, for this reason (...) awareness raising (...) is more appropriate."⁴⁴ In that respect it was also warned against the risk of creating a plethora of different diploma-like certificates which would risk to fragmentize rather than consolidate non-formal education and would eventually create the same problems of transnational (mutual) recognition as they exist in the field of formal and vocational education.

It is important to note that Youth Forum Member Organisations expressed a preference for a rather generic validation of non-formal learning, its environments and providers over a formalised recognition through certification or accreditation. Even so, it was appreciated that "when thinking about certain target groups (...) such a 'touchable and material' recognition [i.e. certificates] would [be] an incentive to keep on following the active (lifelong/lifewide) learning pathway. (...) It would be also interesting, for example, to have an independent institution that registers all non-formal actors" and which would be able to provide information about their programmes.⁴⁵ The existing Forum on the Transparency of Qualifications should extend its expertise beyond the sector of vocational training and integrate actors with expertise in (youth) mobility and the whole spectrum of lifewide and lifelong learning. In that sense it might also be considered to develop CEDEFOP in a way so that it would become a structure of support for the whole field of lifelong and lifewide learning, thus fully realising the holistic approach of the Memorandum.

The responses to the questionnaire also showed that, while the idea behind APEL was understood and welcomed, APEL-systems (implemented in reality) were basically unknown to many youth organisations.

Similar to the responses to Key Message 1 it was also emphasized that lifewide and lifelong learning is also of utmost importance for the reproduction of values that are

43 EFIL

44 AEGEE

45 JECI-MIEC

essential to the sustainability of democratic societies, such as tolerance, respect, empathy, non-discrimination, intercultural skills, active citizenship, etc.

Key Message 5: Rethinking Guidance and Counselling

Very few organisations answered in detail to questions related to Key message 5. In some cases they referred to the answers given under Key Message 1.

It was expressed that in order to make guidance and counselling an integral part of an open Europe full co-operation of the member States was needed. This was seen to be more likely if and when "guarantees for subsidiarity" were given. "The European Commission should take the initiative to establish a database and a portal", which would facilitate integrated access to national data.⁴⁶

The idea of developing guidelines for quality in guidance and counselling was welcomed, as was the suggestions of further European co-operation on the issue.⁴⁷ Alliansi pointed out that ERYICA⁴⁸ had already undertaken work in this regard.

In regard to the existing programmes, one organisation expressed that more projects on guidance and counselling should be supported, that the general funding for the programmes should be increased and that bureaucratic procedures were made less bureaucratic in order to encourage more projects and more organisations to apply.⁴⁹

Several organisations emphasised that youth organisations are very strongly locally rooted and that this could be better used by information networks, which sometimes lack these local links (or are limited to urban centres). Links between such networks and youth NGO's should be strengthened where they exist and encouraged where they do not yet exist. Youth organisations could particularly play an important role in guidance and counselling vis-à-vis young people who are not likely to "access these services in more traditional environments, such as colleges and schools. Many youth organisations are already involved by sharing information on relevant courses and opportunities with young people, and in working in partnerships with schools and colleges and others to provide innovative services to young people."⁵⁰

46 YEPP

47 JECI-MIEC

48 European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA)

49 YEPP

50 ECYC, likewise EEE-YFU and JECI-MIEC

Key Message 6: Bringing Learning Closer to Home

On a general level the intention to turn schools (and training centres) "into multi-purpose local learning centres", as stated in the Lisbon Council conclusions was seen as a positive objective. Nevertheless, it was mentioned that "it is important to note that for many people, schools are places, which have a negative connotation, due to [their] previous experience. Many young people and adults are extremely reluctant to go back into schools".⁵¹ And "as well as schools, Youth Information Centres, youth groups and community centres are environments where learning can be achieved at local level."⁵²

Opening up schools to cater for learning opportunities for all age groups should be accompanied by establishing learning partnerships of schools with other providers such as adult education organisations, community groups and youth NGO's. Reforming and opening up schools should not be done with the perspective of making schools the only or prime agency of lifelong learning, but this should rather be part of a multi-agency approach, which would make learning opportunities more flexible and responsive to complex and multi-faceted needs. Special efforts should be made to make such learning centres accessible and interesting for less privileged groups of society and with lower levels of initial education. It is advisable to make use of NGO's, social workers etc. who have experience in working with these target groups⁵³.

Learning partnerships between the different providers of education and training and the youth clubs and associations, enterprises and R&D can only be realised successfully if these different actors truly recognise and value each others contribution to lifelong and lifewide learning. Recognition, in the full sense of the word, would first of all require knowledge about the realities, concepts and very different conditions under which each of these actors work. The European Union should therefore put more emphasis on overcoming these boundaries and facilitating information and exchange between these different actors at all levels (local, inter-regional, European). Furthermore, the existing programmes should provide support to (the development of) tools for inter-generational collaboration⁵⁴ in lifelong and lifewide education.

51 ECYC

52 NYCI

53 YEPP

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Finally, one organisation made the point that "while access to the Internet is important, a lifelong learning culture is not just about computers, but also about the socialisation of young people as individuals, as family members and as members of wider communities."⁵⁵ This underlines that all learning, including learning that takes place in schools today and which may take place in schools as "multi-purpose local learning centres", needs to be embedded in the network of families, the local community and its associations of citizens.

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Examples of Good Practice

As said in the introduction, a number of projects and approaches were mentioned in response to the questionnaire, however the level of information given was varying greatly and was overall insufficient for a systematic evaluation and documentation. The Youth Forum may therefore consider to tackle this issue separately in the future.

More research identifying the existing practises would definitely be useful, and this should be one focus of the Action Plan. This kind of research should in particular look into the specificity of methodologies developed in the youth sector (as well as those developed by other sectors and providers) and in how far they may prove useful for other learners as well, and what impact these kind of learning experiences have on stimulating the willingness for truly learning lifewide and lifelong.

This said there were nevertheless some examples in responses which are reported here as an indication of what type of projects were considered good practise and what methodologies have been developed in the youth sector. Additionally, in order to provide a more complete picture we also include here an excerpt of what has been previously published by the Youth Forum in the study "Building Bridges for Learning – The recognition and value of non-formal education in youth activity" by Dr. Pasi Sahlberg⁵⁶. In fact, some of the good practises mentioned by Member Organisations in response to the questionnaire were already documented there.

⁵⁶ The full study is available for download at the website of the Youth Forum:
http://www.youthforum.org/publications/archive_en/index.htm

Examples by JECI-MIEC⁵⁷

The following three examples provided by JECI-MIEC, a student organisation focussing in its activities however on non-formal practice, try to put in evidence how such an organisation deals with formal and non-formal education issues. Working *with* and *for* students (secondary and higher education), the organisation provides a variety of learning contexts (meetings, seminars, activities...). This is done not primarily from a theoretical perspective, but rather based on the students' own experiences (therefore, their own concerns, opinions, and proposals).

Such activities are complementary to the knowledge already acquired in the formal system. Experiences like the European activities cited below help students put into context what they learn or deal with at school or university, promoting new points of reference, challenging participants in what their values, convictions and dreams are:

University Study Sessions

The *Study Sessions* gather around 35 students from all around Europe in order to share, confront and deepen their experiences within their studying environment. They analyse a current, social or cultural theme, approaching it from a "young student perspective". *Study Sessions* also put strong emphasis on developing guidelines for action and work within the specific studying reality of each participant; introducing nevertheless a European wide view.

1997: "Future Professionals" – focusing on the influences the labour market has in university, their implications for students as "future professionals", and the impact it has in society.

1998: "The role of university in a learning society" – aiming to tackle the concept of "learning society" and its characteristics, defining the "new educational needs" and abilities demanded by everybody, and finally to deepening on the challenges this situation is posing to university in its changing significance as a place of production of knowledge.

⁵⁷ Further information about all of the examples provided by JECI-MIEC can be obtained from JECI-MIEC, European Co-ordination, rue du Marteau 19, 1000 Brusels, jecimiec@skynet.be Homepage: <http://users.skynet.be/jecimiec/>

- 1999: "Information technology and media as new educational actors"** – enabling a closer look to the presence and impact of IT&M in what the "transfer of knowledge" is concerned; it furthermore assessed the relationship between these new educational agents and democracy, power, freedom, etc.
- 2000: "Studying together in a multicultural society"** – taking a closer look at the presence and impacts of wider multicultural studying contexts in our educational processes, and assessing the challenges posed to university in transforming such multicultural contexts into intercultural ones.

Secondary Summer Weeks

In the same line as the previous, the *Secondary Summer Weeks* aim at meeting secondary students from all over Europe, offering a good combination of leisure time and working moments. The Summer Weeks facilitate the exchange of participants' experiences and opinions in what school-related issues are concerned. They also actively promote personal reflection and encourage students to participate and take responsibilities within their studying milieu.

- 1997: "Intercultural learning as a daily challenge"** – aiming at sharing and confronting a variety of "intercultural" situations in the different European countries, assessing the challenges posed to the respective educative systems. It analysed not only the potentials of intercultural learning methods, but as well its limitations.
- 1998: "Make school yours!"** – analysing the various actors present at school and their respective roles, emphasising the power and responsibility of students towards all processes of transformation within their own school.
- 1999: "Education for Citizenship"** – assessing the role formal and non-formal educators have in promoting citizenship as a value inherent to democratic societies. It strongly aimed at empowering participants towards their role as young students in permanently re-building a fairer society in solidarity.
- 2000: "Media and Education"** – analysing the impact that mass media, and more concretely the new forms of information and communication, have among secondary students. It also aimed at assessing the role that youth movements are playing as non-formal actors in dealing with those powerful means of our so-called also "society of communication".

SPARK

"SPARK - The civil society as an employer" was carried out as a joint venture between the Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi (i.e. the national youth council of Finland) and the Finnish Youth Academy in 1998-1999. Through this project innovative forms and means were sought to allow NGO's to provide work and offer a framework for learning and practical training. The SPARK project departs from the concept of life-long learning and from the understanding that non-formal learning and activities within the third sector can enhance future employment.

Within the project, young unemployed people were offered working experience in non-governmental organisations and a training package, which was partly provided through the internet. The young participants carried out projects, which support the activities of the non-governmental organisations. They arranged camps, competitions, an other events and were in charge of information and marketing. The projects were carried out in the form of a three month practical training. The young people took actively part in developing and evaluating the training schemes. Persons previously involved in the work of the non-governmental organisations were acting as advisers/mentors. The learning process was supported and reflected upon with the assistance of a web-institute. The web-institute served as a tool for interaction and reflection between the different youngsters and the host organisations participating in the project. The mentors were trained to help the young people analyse their own activities, to learn guiding skills in order to guide the young unemployed in the project work.

Aims of SPARK

- to strengthen the role of non-governmental organisations as an environment for growth and learning and as an employer;
- to explore the potentials of non-governmental organisations to find employment paths for young people;
- to support non-governmental organisations in finding new means of operation and work opportunities in co-operation with educational institutions, employment authorities and business life;
- to develop new means of operation, through which professional and educational aspects are combined, and to offer practical work experience;
- to develop project work as an intermediary between learning and practical training;
- to make use of new educational tools and develop a data network as a means of supporting the activities of non-governmental organisations;

- to learn from the experience of mentor-activities and ways of supporting young people in other countries;
- to benefit from the most successful experiences of employing young people;
- to develop a joint model for evaluating the impact of different projects.

The SPARK project was part-financed by the EC initiative *Youthstart*.

More information about SPARK can be obtained via <http://spark.alli.fi/> The Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianissi was subsequently also a partner in a similar follow-up project, which build on the experience of SPARK, called "uusi TYÖ" (new work). Cf. <http://www.alli.fi/uusityo/>

Youth Achievement Awards

The Youth Achievement Awards in the UK were mentioned by ECYC as a good example of youth work projects "helping to re-engage young people into learning":

"The Youth Achievement Awards were developed to recognise and accredit young people's achievements and experience from youth work. They are based on peer education and encourage young people's progressive involvement in decision making as they move through the challenges. Young people agree, support and assess each other's Challenges through the Award Group, supported by youth workers. The Youth Achievement Awards encourage quality youth work and thus support the role of youth workers, easing rather than adding to their work-load. It starts from young people's interests and accredit their normal youth work activities, recognise their achievements, and encourage them to plan and review their learning. It can lead to identifiable social skills development which is the basis of helping young people to take control of their lives, and, for example, to avoid risk behaviours. The Awards encourage progression through a series of four awards each requiring the completion of a number of Challenges."⁵⁸

⁵⁸ <http://www.ukyouth.org/>

The following examples are taken from: "Building Bridges for Learning – The recognition and value of non-formal education in youth activity" a study carried out by Dr Pasi Sahlberg for and in co-operation with the European Youth Forum.

Example 1. Recreational Activity Study Book

This activity is organised by the Youth Academy and it is targeted to all young people over 13 years of age. This is a national programme and apparently there are over 35 000 students involved in all parts of the country (in September 1999). The programme is financed jointly by the national Government and private companies.

Young people are often willing to participate in voluntary activities. They attend projects, hold positions of trust and responsibility, take courses etc. In these activities young people learn the valuable skills that they need in their lives: co-operation and team work skills, communication skills, problem solving, creativity, awareness of environmental issues, ability to adjust, enterprising spirit, and so forth. Voluntary activities offer many good opportunities to learn these skills.

People do not learn these skills from books. They are learnt by doing them in real situations by taking responsibility. This kind of non-formal learning, in conjunction with learning in school, is becoming more and more recognised in this country. One of the biggest efforts to promote this goal was the establishment of the Youth Academy and the *Recreational Activity Study Book* in 1994. The Youth Academy is a joint effort of 12 major national youth and sports organisations both for the recognition of non-formal learning and for creating new opportunities of various activities for young people. In the study book, one can easily document and gather all the participation and learning in situations outside formal education system.

At the moment there are over 200 educational institutions taking into account the credits in the students' *Recreational Activity Study Book*. The Youth Academy and the collaborating educational institutions have a written agreement constituting the way the educational institu-

tions recognise the study book credits. A large experience in recreational activities and voluntary work can be of help either when applying to these educational institutions or as a part of the studies themselves.

The Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education have recently included the notion of the importance of learning in various environments in several policy statements. Professional skills, for example, are increasingly a combination of formal and non-formal education and a result of a mixture of learning environments. The emphasis is rather on social and interaction skills than on "traditional" professional skills. The Youth Academy is strongly participating in processes carried out by the authorities, promoting the recognition of non-formal learning taking place within recreational activities and voluntary work.

In co-operation with the national employers' organisations, the Youth Academy has also been creating ways of recognising the skills and knowledge acquired in non-formal learning when recruiting young people for summer or permanent jobs. The Recreational Activity Study Book is a good way of verifying the non-formal learning also in recruiting employees.

The national authorities in collaboration with the major Finnish employers' organisation have emphasised learning that takes place in recreational activities and voluntary work. Various non-governmental organisations, such as Scouts & Guides, 4H, sports organisations, church, the Red Cross, youth organisations, can offer valuable opportunities to learn leadership and organising skills and other competencies in practice. The difficulty this far has been to see the participation in such organisations' activities from the viewpoint of learning. The Youth Academy has been an active facilitator in promoting such non-formal learning in the society.

Example 2. Training course for youth leaders – leadership development ⁱⁱ

The target group of this initiative was the leaders in the national youth organisations. The group size was 30. The course was financed by the Institute of Social and Physical Health that is a state agency.

The training course was divided in six parts, each which can be attended separately. Each part had a different leadership-related theme: project management, team building and group management, different faces of a leader, organisational development, keeping up inspiration and creativity as a leader, and to work with positive development as a leader.

The training course had a participatory approach and the content was adjusted to each participants personal needs. The participants contributed to the course and they were the ones who created the content.

One person was appointed to be a reporter. He made a written summary of the meeting that will be shared among the participants. There was also a person called "gold nugget finder" (someone who is supposed to find the precious pieces). This person will gather the good ideas and experiences in a separate report.

Example 3. Summer University on Agricultureⁱⁱⁱ

This activity is organised by MRCJ – Mouvement de la Jeunesse Agricole Chrétienne. The target group is young people living in rural areas and working in local and rural development and agriculture. There are about 150 participants and the activity is financed by the Leonardo Programme.

The Summer University takes place biannually. It gathers young people from different countries that are interested in or working on agriculture within the framework of rural development. The topic of the Summer University in 1998 was "Agriculture, installation and territory", that is, the possibilities that young people have of remaining in rural areas and working in agriculture. The seminar also aimed at giving the participants elements to make their own choice regarding agriculture and exchanging the situation and problems they face in order to find elements that the organisation could use to develop actions and go on reflecting on the topic.

The following methods were used during the four-day seminar: experts' presentations on different topics, study visits, discussions, workshops, and round-table discussions. As the move-

ment dedicates a lot of effort working on agriculture, the Summer University offers them the opportunity to gather people from all the different regions in Europe to give a wider perspective of the work being done at national level. The event invites politicians to hear and discuss the positions of young people about agriculture and rural development.

Example 4. Debate Programme^{lv}

The organiser of this programme is the Debate Club of the University of Maribor. It is meant for the general secondary school and university students. There are apparently approximately 10 to 20 students per club, and they are financed by the Soros Foundation and the respective schools and universities.

Debate clubs are run by students for students to activate formal discussions on social issues. The activities could be incorporated into subjects such as sociology, English language for secondary school students. It is recognised as an independent course for the university students.

Example 5. Listen up! - Hør Her!^{lv}

This programme was organised by a national School Student Organisation. The target group is school students in Upper Secondary Education (general education and vocational education) and about 30 school students participated in the course leader training on national level. These people visited between 150 and 200 upper secondary schools and spent one day with the school student council in each school.

Two persons from each class participated in this course, in total circa 7000 persons. These persons again went to each their class and acted as course leaders during one half school day. In total an estimated number of 65000 school students participated in the course. The program was funded by various sponsors. The major funding, however, came from the largest employers organisation and the trade union.

The aim of the campaign was to improve the active participation of young people in school in particular and in society in general. Normally only 3-4 school students of a class of 30 would participate actively, asking questions, discussing, or present an opinion. Someone would discuss powerfully and fight for ones opinion, be relaxed and funny when talking with others in the schoolyard, whatever issue it would be. However, as soon as the same person enters the class-room he feels uncomfortable when raising an issue, finds it stressing to give a presentation and, in general, prefers to be quiet. The message given through the campaign was that in class as in life one have to make oneself heard, to speak out ones opinion and make others listen up.

During one whole school day, the national course leaders would work with the school student council that exist in every school, two persons from every class. Starting out with ice-breakers and energisers, and then discussing how to give a presentation and how important voice, movements and eyes are when giving a presentation. Apart from this short theoretical part, the whole day would be practical and interactive, involving everybody present. The course was based on role-plays. Silly theatrical scenes with a princess and two knights fighting about her, where the participants could overplay all they wanted, romantic postures and tragic endings with death cramps on the floor. Repeating this scene some times until everyone was loosened up and then trying other scenes – oral examination, job interview, group pressure, trying to persuade your parent to let you go to some festival alone. Silly and serous mixed together always discussing with the participants the purpose of the exercise and how it could be related to a real life situation.

After going through the course, the participants were given the task to try out as course leaders for each other. The two persons from each class would give the same course to their own class in the days following the course.

As a final part of the day, the school student council was given information about school students rights, tips and suggestions for improving the functioning of the council and developing their activities.

In total 30 persons participated in course leader training in the beginning of summer 95. These leaders would have the task to travel the country and visit the participating schools. For some this meant up to two weeks of travelling with school visits every day.

The campaign turned out to be a success. Positive feedback from participating school students as well as their teachers and head teachers told that the level of active participation had seen a jump in the schools. Especially the school students that had the responsibility of being course leader in their own class felt much more self assured when speaking, but also the feeling of being more relaxed about raising one's voice in the class was generally improved. Also for the organisation itself the campaign was successful. Several of the school student councils that had participated not only became more active on their own school, but also in the activities of the organisation. Council members that had been course leaders engaged in the organisation on regional level. For the campaign that was developed for school start the year after, (the "Society Game") more than 60 school students volunteered to be course leaders on national level.

ⁱ The Youth Academy, olympiastadion, Etelakaarre, 00250 Helsinki, Finland

ⁱⁱ National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, Kungsgatan 74, 11122 Stockholm, Sweden

ⁱⁱⁱ Mijrac-Europe, Palma 24, 08720 Vilafrance del Penedès, Barcelona

^{iv} ESIB, The National Unions of Students in Europe, Liechtensteinstr. 13a, 1090 Vienna, Austria

^v The Norwegian School Student Organisation (NEO), PO BOX 9157 Grønland, 0134 Oslo