

“Participation of Young People in Youth Information Work”

Vienna, 20-23 April 2006

European Seminar, organised jointly by ERYICA, Eurodesk and EYCA,
in the framework of the Austrian Presidency of the European Union

<p>DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE OR PROJECT INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE DIRECTLY IN AN ASPECT OF YOUTH INFORMATION WORK included in Compendium of Projects prepared for the European Seminar</p>
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Ref: **06-06**

Organisation: **IN PETTO**

European Affiliation: **ERYICA**

<p>1. Name of Initiative (project, activity, service or product):</p>
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06 - BELGIUM (Flanders): Young Advisors – Friendship as Prevention

<p>2. Description of Initiative or Project (<i>please give a short but complete description, including the aim of the initiative or project</i>):</p>
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JACs (youth advice centres) and other youth services train young persons (15-19), and coach them to support and help young people in their environment (school, leisure-time activities), and to introduce them to professional social care services if necessary. Young advisors are indispensable intermediaries between professionals and their target groups.

Working with young advisors starts from the notion that young persons share questions and problems predominantly with their peers. They confide in friends. They know what can go wrong, and have clear views. For most young persons, the peer group is an important source of support, and a place where values and norms are developed.

Youth participation is the process of guiding and designing micro- and macro-society by and with young persons. Therefore working with young advisors is more than following the manual. Every JAC develops its way of working together with young advisors, according to the local situation and local youth needs.

<p>3. Form of Youth Participation in Youth Information Addressed by This Initiative :</p>
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(please click on / activate the box which corresponds to your answer)

This is:

- a) An initiative or project that **involves young people directly in the identification of the information needs of young people in their locality or field of interest**
- b) An initiative or project that **involves young people directly in the designing and preparation of information magazines and materials** (for a young public)
- c) An initiative or project that **involves young people directly in informing or advising other young people**
- d) An initiative or project that **involves young people directly in managing or evaluating youth information centres or other services** (such as a youth card)

e) An initiative or project that addresses **another aspect of youth participation in youth information work** (please specify the aspect):

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4. Name and Address of Organisation Responsible for This Initiative:

Name: InPetto – Jeugddienst informatie en preventie
Address: Diksmuidelaan 50, 2600 Berchem, Belgium

5. Name and E-mail Address of Person to Contact (for information about this initiative):

Name: Johan Bertels
E-mail Address: johan@inpetto-jeugddienst.be

6. Who Participated in This Initiative ?

People and organizations involved:

- In Petto: development of the method, providing working materials and organizing a trainings for trainers, evaluation of the project at the national level
- JACs and other youth organizations: promoting the project to young people, giving them training and support, evaluation of the project at the local level
- Young people as volunteers who inform and help their peers.

7. What Was the Scope of This Initiative?

(please click on / activate the box which corresponds to your answer)

Local Regional = Flemish part of Belgium European (The project is also organised in some regions of the Netherlands)

8. When Was This Initiative Undertaken *(please state the date when the activity was started, when it finished, or if it is still continuing):*

An analysis of the social welfare practice in the Flemish part of Belgium (1991) pointed out that people in general, but also young persons, were not really familiar with welfare services. If they knew them at all, they were reluctant to make use of them. Young persons seldom visited assistance centres, and often only when problems had already got out of hand: they had run away from home, were pregnant by accident

JACs – primary assistance initiatives – were always searching for methods to reach young people. The young advisor training was one of the methods that were developed in 1991. The young advisors project is still growing; and the number of people involved is increasing. Not only do they share their enthusiasm for the method, they also share the intention to optimise the objectives and to reach new target groups. In different regions – sometimes with extra funds provided by city councils – efforts are made to recruit young advisors from groups that are difficult to reach.

The project is already internationally known and accepted as a good practice. In the Netherlands, with guidance from In Petto, some initiatives have started to use the same method of peer support and youth participation.

9. What Were the Results Obtained by This Initiative?

2,694 young people from the Flemish part of Belgium have followed the young advisor training between 1991 and 2004.

The conclusions of the evaluation research in 2004 show that young advisors are most likely to be girls aged between 15 and 17. For more than 80% of them, the young advisors training was their first contact with a youth advice centre (JAC). Therefore the project plays an important role in promoting youth information and counselling services among youth.

Young advisors find the knowledge they get from the training useful in their daily contacts with their friends. After participating in the young advisor project, they also feel more self-confident. From being involved in the young advisor project, they know where to search for the information and advice that they need.

And finally, young advisors allow JACs to have access to a lot of information about the needs of young people. As a result, the access to assistance is easier, and JACs can support young people - if necessary - in their daily environment.

10. Report – Publication – Other Product (if there is a report, publication or other “product” relating to this initiative, please state where it can be obtained or consulted, and in which language):

The following material is available concerning this initiative:

(please click on / activate the box **which corresponds to your answer**)

Report Publication Other Product (specify) **video**

Title: - **‘Young Advisors’ Manual**, available at <http://www.eryica.org>

- **Friendship - a way towards prevention** (booklet in Dutch, French & English)

- **Vriendshap als preventie – evaluatieonderzoek van het project JA in Vlaanderen** (evaluation report available only in Dutch)

Language(s): There is also a **video** with French and English subtitles.

Can be consulted / downloaded at these web-sites:

a) <http://www.inpetto-jeugddienst.be/Engels/default.htm>

b) <http://www.jeugdadviseurs.be>

Can be obtained from (address of organisation): In Petto - to be ordered via mailbox@inpetto-jeugddienst.be

11. Additional Information

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This description form has been completed by:

Name of Person: Alenka Zavbi

E-mail Address: alenkazavbi@gmail.com

Name of Organisation: In Petto