



Let's Cycle

a booklet about the experience of
Let's Seminars with Our Neighbours



Let's Cycle CONTENTS

Introduction	page 3
1. Let's Cycle process	page 4
2. The strategic approach	page 7
3. The impact	page 11
4. The spices of Let's Cycle	page 15
5. Let's Cycle as a good practise	page 21
6. The follow up: Let's train	page 25

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Barcelona-Yerevan-Zagreb, 5th of May 2010**



Introduction

Why this booklet?

Since 2007 the cooperation between the Youth in Action Programme countries and the three Neighbouring Regions in the youth field has brought together people and countries that before never collaborated.

This fact has a special meaning for institutions and practitioners that aim to contribute to the cross regional cooperation and dialogue in different fields of non formal education, in the context of the European Union enlargement and Neighbouring Policy.

The *Let's Cycle* strategy has contributed widely to the success of this cooperation and action, involving both practitioners of the youth field and responsible of institutions: in terms of support mechanisms, sustainable partnerships, increased quantity and quality of international partnerships and projects, awareness on the possibilities offered by the Youth in Action Programme, valorisation and dissemination of results and good practices, strengthening of the cooperation among institutions involved

and, last but not least, connection between the pedagogic and the political dimension through the cooperation of promoters.

The actual publication has the purpose to present the process, the strategy and the achievements, considering the *Let's Cycle* as a good practice *of* and *for* cooperation, which can be taken as example by actors belonging to institutions or working in organisations active in the youth field and in the neighbouring cooperation.

The promoters of the *Let's Cycle* (institutions and trainers) hope that the following pages might be also an inspiring tool for actions bringing long term changes.

Let's Cycle has been an exciting process during three years. There were also some hard moments and to carry on with the same motivation of the beginning it was needed an inspiration. We found it in the words of Gandhi: "Be the change you want to see in the world". And we let them here as reflection for your further action.



1. Let's Cycle process

The story and the steps

In the end of 2006 the three Regional SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres (SALTO EuroMed, SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus and SALTO South East Europe)¹, during a meeting in Brussels with the European Commission, took the decision to launch a big event in order to promote a new feature of the Youth in Action Programme (2007-2013): the chance to implement projects with Neighbouring countries, allowing cross regional cooperation among youth organisations of very different geographical areas. Just to make an example, young Italians, Armenians, Germans, Palestinians, Hungarians and Croatians, could for the first time cooperate in one youth project.

This new possibility is important and challenging. It is important because it opens the path to cooperation with our neighbours all together. It is indeed challenging: the geographical areas included express big cultural differences, which makes the intercultural work hard but extremely interesting.

Of course we could not expect that the mere provision of the possibility to promote projects involving these geographical areas would bring

automatically results in terms of implemented projects. To transform this opportunity into a real chance, some gaps needed to be fulfilled, as: the lack of contact among the organisations of the three Neighbouring Regions, of knowledge of their cultural, social and political background, of acquaintance of the youth situation and policies in the different areas.

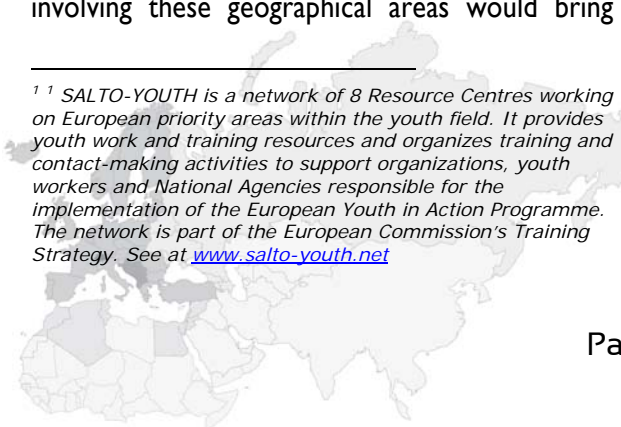
The risk was that, even providing the chance to apply, nobody or very

few would have dared to take it: why? What for? “Hic sunt leones”, “Here there are lions”, the Latins were writing on the unknown lands on their maps. A good reason not to go and discover what was there.

Here it comes the vision of the three Regional SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres, in agreement and with the support of the European Commission, which considered the need to accompany organisations and practitioners in the discovery of existing possibilities of cooperation with Neighbouring Regions in the youth work and non formal education.

In January 2007 the Seminar *Let's Meet our Neighbours and the World* was already under construction. The French National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme became partner of this project and decided to host the event.

¹ SALTO-YOUTH is a network of 8 Resource Centres working on European priority areas within the youth field. It provides youth work and training resources and organizes training and contact-making activities to support organizations, youth workers and National Agencies responsible for the implementation of the European Youth in Action Programme. The network is part of the European Commission's Training Strategy. See at www.salto-youth.net





Let's Meet our Neighbours and the World took place in June 2007 in INJEP (Marly le Roi, France) and was a huge meeting point.

One hundred fifteen representatives of youth NGOs as well as other institutions and stakeholders of the Youth in Action Programme, from Programme countries and from the three Neighbouring Regions, met together in order to share, get involved and promote the European youth Neighbouring Cooperation.

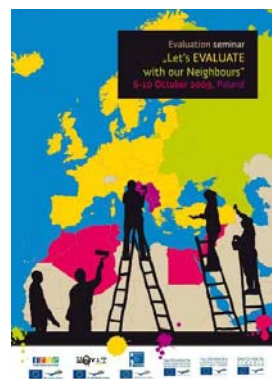
The seminar was a big success in terms of participation, sharing experiences and initiating new cooperation. These results were motivating the three Regional SALTOs to consider and organise other steps of this process, this time involving also the Slovenian and the Polish National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme, hosting National Agencies of Regional SALTOs.



One year later, in June 2008, *Let's Work with our Neighbours* was taking place in Velenje (Slovenia), under the Slovenian Presidency of the European Union. The

second cross-regional event gathered seventy five practitioners of European youth work and youth

policy to continue the process initiated the year before, in order to strengthen the links and create a platform for working together. This was a contact and project oriented event and a number of multilateral new partnerships were set up at the end.



As a third step of the *Let's Cycle* was implemented in Konstancin (Poland) in October 2009:

Let's evaluate with our Neighbours was an evaluation

meeting that gathered seventy two different stakeholders, from practitioners to representatives of National Agencies and SALTO Resource Centres actively involved in activities with the three Neighbouring Regions. They had the opportunity to exchange, reflect and assess together the outcomes and challenges of the work in progress.

Let's evaluate with our Neighbours, thanks to the preparation work set with the two previous seminars, has revealed itself as a fundamental milestone in this cooperation strategy.

Together with the implementation of the Seminar it has been drafted a **Compendium**, titled *Cooperation with Neighbouring Partner Countries 2007-2008*. It contains the numbers of the cooperation, all together and detailed Region by Region, and some relevant examples of projects

implemented by the participants of the *Let's evaluate* Seminar.

It has been created also a [Database www.salto-youth.net/NPC_good_practise_projects](http://www.salto-youth.net/NPC_good_practise_projects), aimed to help youth workers and leaders to promote their successful projects within the Youth in Action Programme and to be an inspiring tool for all those interested in raising the quality of their future projects.

Each Seminar has been organised by the Youth in Action National Agency of the hosting country with the support of the other promoter institutions.

The three Seminars brought together two hundred fifty three participants among practitioners, representatives of SALTO, National Agencies and other institutions

(European Commission, EACEA, Council of Europe, European Youth Forum), team members and reporters.

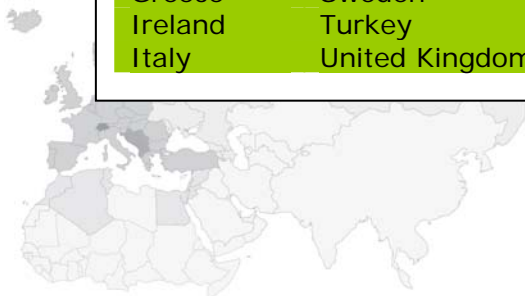
The *Let's Cycle* with the three steps *meeting-working-evaluating* is over. But the follow up, with the aim to deepen the work done and to reinforce the cooperation started, includes:

- *Let's train*, a new cycle of training courses, and
- a *Publication*, concerning cooperation with Neighbouring partner countries (2007-2009) which consists of statistical overview, examples of projects implemented and recommendations.



Participants were coming from the following forty seven countries:

Programme countries		SEE countries	MEDA countries	EECA countries
Austria	Lithuania	Albania	Algeria	Armenia
Belgium	Luxembourg	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Egypt	Azerbaijan
Bulgaria	Norway	Croatia	Israel	Belarus
Cyprus	Poland	FYROM	Jordan	Georgia
Czech Republic	Portugal	Montenegro	Lebanon	Moldova
Denmark	Romania	Serbia	Morocco	Russian Federation
Estonia	Slovakia	UNMIKosovo	Palestinian Authority	Ukraine
France	Slovenia		Syria	
Germany	Spain		Tunisia	
Greece	Sweden			
Ireland	Turkey			
Italy	United Kingdom			



Date	Features	Place
2006	Decision of SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres with the support of the European Commission	
06/2007	Let's Meet our Neighbours and the World	France
06/2008	Let's work with our Neighbours	Slovenia
10/2009	Let's evaluate with our Neighbours	Poland
10/2009	Database of good practices of cooperation with Neighbouring partner countries (2007-2008)	
10/2009	Compendium "Cooperation with Neighbouring Partner Countries 2007-2008"	

The Let's Cycle process and...the follow up

Autumn 2010	3 Let's Train Training Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Civil society, participation, democracy - Peace Education - Recognition of Non Formal Education and employability in youth work 	France Georgia Montenegro
Autumn 2010	Publication concerning cooperation with Neighbouring partner countries (2007-2009)	

2. The strategic approach

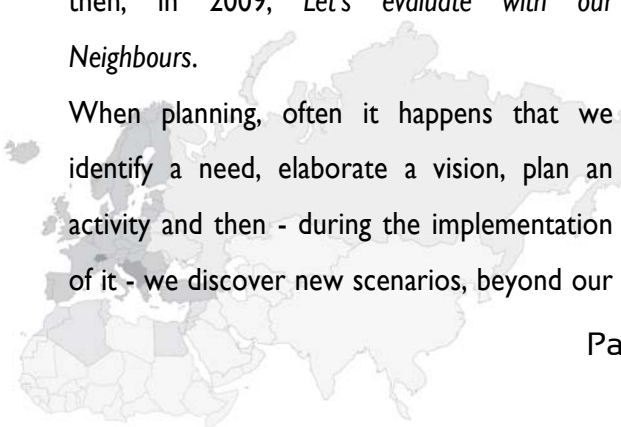
Building strategy step by step

When in 2006 the three Regional SALTOs planned, together with the European Commission, the Seminar *Let's meet our Neighbours and the World* it was not expected that later on there would be such a follow up of this event. The results of *Let's meet* in 2007 were inviting the stakeholders, institutions and practitioners, towards a continuation. So we had in 2008 *Let's work with our Neighbours* and then, in 2009, *Let's evaluate with our Neighbours*.

When planning, often it happens that we identify a need, elaborate a vision, plan an activity and then - during the implementation of it - we discover new scenarios, beyond our

initial intuition. And the initial strategy is developed in a flexible way, adapting it to the situations resulting during the process.

This has been the case of the *Let's Cycle*. As we said, the Youth in Action Programme, starting in 2007, for the first time provided the possibility of cross regional cooperation with Neighbouring countries. The three regional SALTOs realized that a supporting event - offering to actors the chance of gathering and knowing each other - was needed in order to make this possibility of cooperation real.



The vision and the achievements of the first seminar allowed building later the other two phases, originating a step by step process, which was involving also the French, Slovenian and Polish National Agencies of the Programme.

Let's Cycle has been a continuous process backing up a strategy.

Focus of this strategy was to support the cross-regional cooperation and dialogue, in the context of the European Union enlargement and neighbouring policy. It aimed to create the political frame, the educational setting (and to establish a relationship between these two dimensions), the meeting conditions, to foster achievements, to enhance sustainability of the cooperation ensuring the follow up. In terms of tools, it combined partnership activities, theoretical inputs, concrete action planning, and - at the end - good practices and recommendations to transfer.

This strategy had also **four main characteristics**.

First, the event joined together SALTOs and National Agencies, contributing to increase the opportunities of sharing the perspectives at institutional level. The continuous sharing of visions has naturally brought to establish a synergy with the identification of common goals and resources to devote to the main aim of the cross regional cooperation with Neighbouring countries. It has created long

lasting links among the institutions involved and attracted new ones on the path of the institutional cooperation focused on the achievement of a major aim.



Second, it allowed practitioners and their organisations – from countries that never had contact before - *to meet, share, learn from each other and develop projects* in between the *Let's* seminars, to meet again and strengthen the links, exchange good practices and, at the end, to build a common ground for a sustainable cross regional cooperation.

In some cases a coaching support has been ensured by the promoter institutions to the involved organisations and some partnerships are already turning into organised networks. These fruits of the *Let's* process bring a lot of possibilities for the future, probably needing a more organic support system.

Third, it made possible to organise a structured dialogue between Practitioners, Support Structures, Political institutions, other European Structures, such as SALTO Resource Centres, National Agency, European Commission, Executive Agency. They had the chance to meet and discuss, to

work together, sharing the good practices and building recommendations for the future. It has been a unique possibility of empathising with the other actors of the cooperation. Institutions' representatives very seldom have the chance to ask and hear from practitioners what is the reality of their projects; on the other way round, is not in the everyday experience that practitioners can discuss on a wider perspective with the responsible of institutions and make proposals coming from the grass roots.

Therefore it was possible to explore the challenges and good practices accumulated by practitioners in terms of youth projects implementation in Programme countries and Neighbouring Regions, as well as to receive feedback from institutions' representatives on the situation and support schemes available.

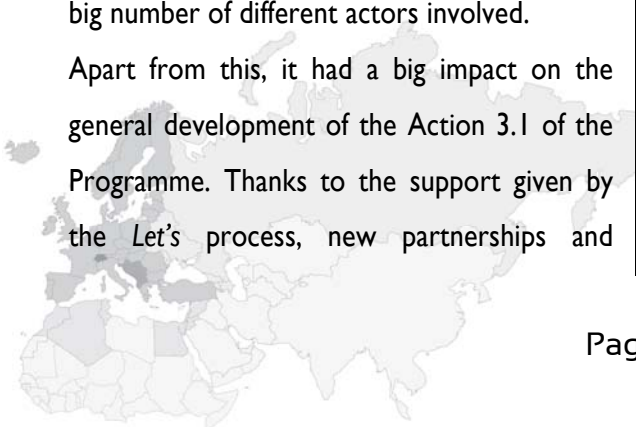
Fourth, the pedagogical and the political dimension of the process were growing together with two teams - the facilitation team of trainers and the team composed by The whole process of three years cooperation has been an outstanding experience with many dimensions: grass root projects and partnerships building, geo-political contexts, with the participation of a big number of different actors involved.

Apart from this, it had a big impact on the general development of the Action 3.1 of the Programme. Thanks to the support given by the *Let's* process, new partnerships and

the representative of promoting institutions – working together and in parallel, feedbacking constantly, strengthening step by step the links between the programme of the seminars and the political framework behind them.

In *Let's* we experienced something different from most of the cases, when politicians and responsible of institutions concentrate on their institutional role and trainers/facilitators dedicate their efforts to make it possible the fact of meeting, sharing and working together: even if the institutional team and the facilitation team worked separately in many occasions, a team composed by both was meeting in the crucial moments (preparation, start, daily evaluations, final evaluation after the end of the seminar). This fact allowed giving to participants of the seminars a more balanced and holistic vision, composed by political and pedagogical elements, where trainers introduced sometimes political reflexions and institutional representatives contributed to develop pedagogical aspects.

networks appeared, a big number of quality projects were implemented, awareness of political dimension of the glo-cal cooperation was spread, new competences of youth workers and young people were acquired, enthusiasm and commitment of participants is promising for future cooperation.



To put it in a nutshell, all the outcomes mentioned would have been impossible to reach with some isolated activity or seminar. The *Let's* process (and the strategy backing it up) with its phases and partial achievements has brought resources, ideas and time for

experimentation. It has supported in this way - following a natural rhythm of growth - the building up of an increasing cross regional cooperation in the youth field.

Aims	
Create the political framework	Create the educational setting
Provide the meeting conditions	Foster achievements
Enhance sustainability of the cooperation	Ensure the follow up
Characteristics	
1 SALTO Resource Centres and National Agencies worked together building common perspectives of institutional cooperation	
2 practitioners and their organisations met, shared, learned from each other and developed projects in between the <i>Let's</i> seminars, exchanged good practices and built the ground for a sustainable cross regional cooperation	
3 it allowed structured dialogue between practitioners, support structures, Political institutions, other European Structures	
4 pedagogical and political dimension of the process were growing together	



3. The impact

Touching the cooperation

Increasing cooperation (in terms of quantity and quality) of the Youth in Action Programme countries and Neighbouring partner countries.

I think that initiatives such as *Let's meet*, *Let's work* and *Let's evaluate* are very valuable and useful for youth workers. Last year I met my partners on the meeting in Slovenia and we were motivated to work on a common project, which was realised in July, because we knew that after a year we will meet again in Poland. So we wanted to present something fresh, new, something that really worked. I think that initiatives that last long, such as this one, 'cause you get opportunity to meet people that are really coming to meet and work and create something big.

Ivana Stanojev, Centre for Nonviolent Resistance, Serbia



A practice of cooperation among Programme countries and countries of these three Regions existed since the previous Youth Programme (2000-2006), under certain restrictions. The long term process of *Let's* (2007-2009) introduced a new strategic dimension to support long-lasting sustainable partnerships and cooperation.

I would say that the atmosphere created was positive, educational and result oriented and participants followed with enthusiasm and commitment. They contributed a lot to the creation of a frame which led to a phase of project development, in a way positively surprising.

Davide Tonon, trainer and coordinator of the Let's seminars

During the selection process priority was given to previous participants of *Let's* events. Through the time spent together - supported

by the methodology which fostered sharing, exchanging, common problem solving, group work activities and constant support of different stakeholders (trainers, staff of SALTO Resource Centres and National Agencies, practitioners themselves and other relevant institutions) - *new projects* have been initiated and *recommendations* for future cooperation have been developed.

The first two seminars were aimed to start or draft new project ideas with Neighbouring countries.

Besides working on the establishment and support of partnerships and projects, each seminar was focused on *the quality aspects* as well. During *Let's evaluate* representatives of Programme's beneficiaries together with representatives of the National Agencies and SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres, reflected on the past experience and cooperation with

these Regions and among them. Taking into account cultural backgrounds, social aspects, legal framework and political context of youth-work in these 3 Regions and European Union, **24 innovative Good Practices** transferable to other realities were identified. In the same process, participants addressed a **set of 25 Recommendations** to different stakeholders: practitioners active in the Youth in Action Programme, SALTO Resource Centres and National Agencies, and the Executive Agency of the European Commission. Recommendations have been grouped in thematic areas (practical and content oriented) for easier consultations:

- financial issues,
- technicalities and procedures,

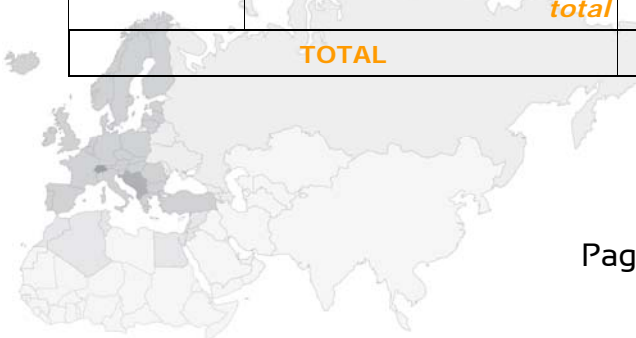
- inclusion,
- support,
- content and methodology,
- partnership,
- visa.

Both, the *Recommendations* and *Good Practices* are presented in a *Publication* together with the results of the overall cooperation with three Neighbouring Regions (2007-2009).



Below you can see a chart presenting the numbers of project ideas developed during the first two steps of the *Let's Cycle*:

Event	Action under which project ideas were developed	No. of projects ideas	Proposed type of activity developed during the event
LET'S MEET...	Action 2 – European Voluntary Service	1	/
	Action 3.1. - Cooperation with the Neighbouring Partner Countries of the EU	30	Youth Exchanges, Seminars, Training Courses, Job Shadowing, Study Visit, Feasibility Visit
	total	31	
LET'S WORK...	Action 2 – European Voluntary Service	0	
	Action 3.1. - Cooperation with the Neighbouring Partner Countries of the European Union	12	Youth Exchanges, Seminars, Training Courses
	total	12	
TOTAL		43	



Cooperation in an international framework

Three hosting National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme and three Regional SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres developed together the programme of the seminars, gave inputs to the content, facilitated recruitment and selection of participants, supported trainers during implementation of the seminars, gave feedbacks and evaluated each seminar and the whole cooperation experience together with the team of trainers.

As different institutions have different roles and experiences in the implementation of the Youth in Action Programme their contribution to the *Let's* seminars was also diverse.

The big team brought extra value and increased the quality of the overall process and reconfirmed: the importance to keep regular update of the developments among all stakeholders; the contribution of mid-term evaluation meetings to the coherence,

I want to stress once again the excellent coordination and work with stakeholders. It was great to see that they are not simply resource persons from whom we can request some staff and they will do, but we were working in a real enlarged team. And this was one of the encouraging and supporting factors in this challenging event.

Areg Tadevosyan, Let's trainer

ownership and maximum usage of different resources present; the relevance of getting

The work in the big team (training team + stakeholders) was since the beginning very interesting. We had in some moments 16 people counting team and stakeholders, which was not easy to coordinate. It's innovative way of work, is enriching for all of us (especially for the commitment of everybody) and also for participants that benefit of complementary competences. It's one of the big successes of this Seminar, even if we can increase the quality. For instance we didn't have a periodic meeting of the big team, when it would have been the case for sure. A promising cooperation and a model.

Davide Tonon, trainer and coordinator of the

feedback and sharing impressions in order to introduce last modifications and improvements of coming activities or programme elements.

In all three *Let's* events, trainers' teams were coordinated by one of the trainers, who supported the work of the team of trainers and facilitated the communication flow between trainers and team of organisers.

The basic principle for the composition of the team of trainers was coherent with the general principle of the SALTO-YOUTH network: gender balance and regional representation.

Developing the concept of the seminars, preparing and conducting sessions/workshops together was a message that cooperation between Neighbouring Regions and Programme countries is possible. It was putting in practice what we are promoting.

And it was not always an easy process, as the teamers had to get to know and learn a lot about each-other work and cultural realities, approaches, understanding of non-formal education and facilitation of learning process. All this happened in a parallel process with the process of preparing events and

facilitating/managing group processes during them. But during this 3 years' process of cooperation each of the teamers had the chance to develop as trainer and person while working in so dynamic, colorful and challenging team.

It was a bit challenging to work in such a large team of trainers (especially during the first prep), but it was obvious that only through having enough of resources we managed to deal with such a variety in the group and also to make adjustments on the way (e.g. when we were meeting some unexpected expectations from participants... basic info on Youth in Action and others).

Areg Tadevosyan, Let's trainer

Impact on local youth in areas where Let's activities took place

The three *Let's* seminars took place in different countries. All of them were organised in small towns and the groups of participants had the chance to explore the local communities and to get in touch with inhabitants during activities and in the free time.

During *Let's work* the local youth centre was involved in facilitating the interaction with local young people. The centre organised activities for the free afternoon in order to discover the town from the perspective of young people and to introduce sport and fun activities of local youth. For the last evening a youth band

prepared a concert in the youth centre for the participants of the seminar and the locals.

Participants from Mediterranean partner countries, South East of Europe and Easter Europe and Caucasus together with participants from different countries of European Union were very visible and well accepted by locals. Hereupon, the impact of the *Let's* seminars in these local communities was an increased motivation of some youngsters of the area to get active and to involve in mobility, citizenship, participation and/or intercultural projects.



4. The spices of Let's Cycle

Colours, smells and sounds of the neighbours

During all evaluation activities the participants of Let's events were pointing out that this set of events was somehow special and different from other international experiences they had participated in before. Some of them were bringing up analogies with their other projects especially those with cross-regional dimension.

We would like to analyse the specific factors making this experience unique for the Let's participants.

First and the most important factor is for sure **the cross-regional dimension** itself, which was previously mentioned as the main aim and the main setting decided for *Let's Cycle*.

The first event of the set took place in 2007, when most of participants came with some experience from the previous Youth Programme, and most of them remembered the situation with the three Neighbouring Partner regions and restrictions for mixing Regions. Most of participants were describing the previous situation as a great possibility for intercultural cooperation and dialogue but which though had some "walls" in between sometimes almost neighbouring countries. And the *Let's meet with our*

neighbours and the world, as an opening of the new Programme for 2007-2013, was a true opening in this restricted situation for most of the participants. There was a number of them who never had a chance to meet anybody from this or that region before and this opening was seen as a signal of a new type of a family relations and family composition.

The distance from Aleppo (Syria) to Tbilisi (Georgia) is 559 miles and the distance from the same Tbilisi to Stockholm (Sweden) is more than 3 times longer - 1672 miles, but for young Georgians it was quite possible to develop initiatives with their Swedish peers and quite unlikely to do something with the same Swedish partners involving their colleagues from Syria.

For sure it was a big challenge for the organisers to promote the cross-regional cooperation, as everybody was quite aware that although the formal restriction on "mixing the neighbouring regions" was taken out, still the projects with "mixing" are not a priority, budget is limited and it was still advisable to take partners from the same Region. So on one hand everybody in the team of the promoters of Let's was sure about the value of cross-regional cooperation but yet nobody wanted to create a false

sense of confidence amongst the participants that “it is going to be easy”. The final decision was to open up the gates, to get participants from different regions together, to show them the advantages of a wider palette with more Colours and Spices, but also to make clear that it is not very easy to walk that path.



The results of this cultural crossroad were amazing even for the Organisers themselves. The whole palette of European Union together with Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Mediterranean Countries and South East Europe was something that is even hard to describe in words. People from Spain, Norway, Georgia, Croatia and Algeria singing together an Armenian song... A huge table with food and drinks presenting the whole range of Mediterranean, European, Caucasian and Balkan cuisines. Spices in the sweets, spices in dishes and spices in the air in the interested smiley faces of youth workers trying to identify who is

where and what in this mess... Music from Africa after music from Nordic regions, then another song from people of African origin living in another European country. It was a real cross-cultural crossroad in action. The same spirit was present during the next two events: it went just wider and deeper.

During organizational fairs, good practice presentations and sharing on local realities participants of *Let's Cycle* events were discovering a totally new world of possibilities and realities.

All three events of the *Let's Cycle* served as sharing platforms which gave participants a possibility to discover other youth work and life realities. It was possible to explore on the spot, to go deeper and to reach a basic understanding on other people and cultures. Moreover participants had a chance to create contacts with people that could help them to start a deeper discovery.

The cultural pot was boiling meanwhile dialogue and sharing was continuing not only at the structured spots in the programme (organisations' fairs, presentations etc.) but on much higher extent - during the informal meetings and communication out of the programme or during the cultural/intercultural program elements, where the participants had the

chance to communicate around the topics they were interested in and with those who they considered to be more interesting at those moments. Organising team tried to do its best in providing participants with enough space for informal communication also by presenting cultural spices from the hosting countries (excursions, cultural programs, evenings out, etc.).



Another interesting spice was **the inclusion of participants** from the previous events. The participation in the set of *Let's* was not limited to the same people, but it was decided that participants from previous events, and especially those that have realized concrete follow-up projects were highly encouraged to participate on the next stages as well. Those people were really serving as catalysts for group integration. Their inputs helped a lot to describe the logics behind *Let's* events to those which were new.

They actually served as non-formal resource persons to the team, helping a

lot with their inspirations and knowledge from previous events and their own experience gained during the follow-up projects they implemented in between the *Let's Cycle* events.

One more spice of the *Let's Cycle* was the extensive usage of **visual material** during the events. Short films were prepared during all three activities; they were then screened by the end of each. These films also served as good starters at next events, watching the film presenting the previous event helped the participant feel somehow connected to the whole set of *Let's*. This helped a lot in creating a shared vision on the strategic logic behind the set of events. Besides, all three events were photographed and each day started with a photo-Compilation from the previous working day, maintaining the same continuity in the framework of the given event.

Here we should also mention the overall **format and logic** of the *Let's Cycle* as another spice. Our approach was to show to participants, youth workers and youth leaders, concrete continuation and strategic institutionalized logics after each event.

There are a number of various large-scale events organised by various international and national institutions, but it is not always visible that strategic visions and

structured follow-up are planned by organisers.

Participants of the *Let's meet* were introduced with a possible continuation and logical set of events which were going to follow this starting point. In general the set of *meeting, working* and *evaluating* was something which gave to participants a sense of belonging to a long-term strategic process. Regardless their participation in proceeding phases, they knew that the continuation was planned... We have *met*, we have developed a joint *work* together and then we are going to get together to *evaluate* what was done and how it was done.

It was important to know that even after the end of this set of *Let's* the process was not stopped, and now, when we are writing this report another set of events is already announced and *Let's Train* is already in the process.

We would like to state that it is extremely important for the participants and for the effectiveness of the process to make clear what is the general logics and political/strategic framework where the concrete work being done is fitting. Of course it is hard to underestimate the results of numerous stand-alone international youth events. But even in such cases these events are fitting in some larger political frameworks and it is

quite important to make this clear to participants.

During the *Let's cycle* events it was done systematically and by highest officials of European Commission and other European Institutions, which was also contribution to the level of awareness of the participants on the political processes. Actually the possibility to communicate directly and to receive inputs from the representatives of European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, the Partnership, European Youth Forum, SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres and Youth in Action Programme National Agencies was one more added value of all three events.

This was not only about inputs but also about the possibilities of exploration the whole range of support structures available for youth organisations and groups working in the framework of the Youth in Action Programme of European Commission. Permanent presence of the representatives of these support structures, presentations of their work and their support mechanisms, as well as the continuous introduction of the resources and educational materials prepared by these structures was enriching this experience for participants and providing them with a toolbox which

they will in further multiply in their communities and organisations.

It is also important to note that the institutions present were not just giving their keynote speeches on the plenary and “communicating a bit during the coffee break” with participants, but they were permanently taking part in all the activities, and bringing in their expertise and sharing with participants whenever possible.

Let's Train with our Neighbours belongs to the long term cooperation between the Regional SALTO Resource Centres (SALTO EuroMed, SALTO South East Europe and SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus) fostered by the European Commission together with French, Slovenian and Polish National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme:

Let's Train with our Neighbours is a new step into the cooperation. In fact, this year, each Regional SALTO in cooperation with a thematic SALTO will develop a specific topic relevant for the Region. This will be 3 unique parallel training courses involving participants from all Neighbouring Regions:

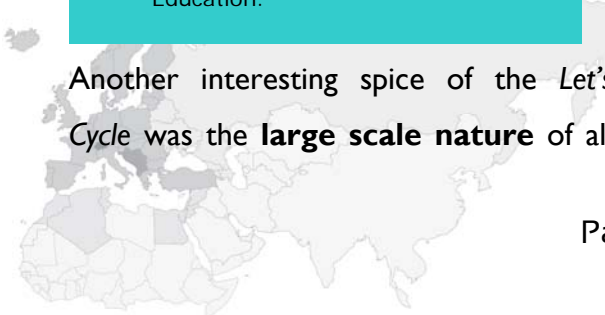
- SALTOs EuroMed and Participation will focus at Civil Society, Participation and Democracy
- SALTOs South East Europe and Training & Cooperation will focus at Recognition of non-formal learning
- and finally SALTOs Eastern Europe and Caucasus with SALTO Cultural Diversity will focus on Peace Education.

Another interesting spice of the *Let's Cycle* was the **large scale nature** of all

the events. It was quite natural to a bigger number of participants as the geographical coverage of these events was almost the largest possible. This large amounts of the people was on one had a challenge, as it was not always possible to have an overall group dynamic, but on the other hand it was opening up quite a lot of possibilities for participants to self organise in smaller sub-groups, to explore more of different cultural realities and also to create a bigger variety of contacts for possible future joint activities.

During all three events there were special spaces dedicated to structured dialogue among youth workers coming from the different Regions and those from Programme countries interested in specifying Neighbouring Regions with appropriate Regional SALTO Resource Centres, where they were presenting the specific features of their respective regional procedures, alongside with their working schemes and plans for future. These meetings also served as a space for reflection on different regional realities and highlighting specific challenges as well as sharing recipes and good practices on the ways of dealing with those challenges.

It is also important to note that the aspect of **intercultural learning and dialogue**, which is one of the most



important cornerstones of the Youth in Action Programme, was presented during the *Let's Cycle* quite well. The number of people from different religious backgrounds, different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, different age groups was quite big, which on one hand was requiring a higher level of intercultural sensitivity (which was obviously there), but on the other hand creating more space for exploring so many different cultural aspects, which itself was a separate result, even if not taking in consideration the other working spheres of these three events.

When one is creating such a geographical mosaic, it is not possible to avoid the situations when participants from

conflicting countries and areas can come across. And here it was also the case, but finalizing we can note that the participants have found a possibility and courage to abstract from their current political realities and even use this wide platform for dialogue and looking for ways for constructive cooperation.

Let's Cycle was quite a spicy process and for sure not all the possible interesting moments are presented here. Many situations have been lived just individually or in small groups and have not been reported to the whole group; the contact and cooperation developed in between the *Let's Cycle* events not always brought a feedback to the promoter institutions and the team of trainers.



5. Let's Cycle as a good practice

A wheel is always a wheel!

What is making a project a *good practice* to transfer? This was one of the most frequent discussion topics during the whole set of *Let's Cycle*. The huge variety of cultures, work styles and results brought to the events of *Let's* were quite impressive, and this variety was also making a bit hard to find answers to even simple questions like *what is a good practice?*

But for sure the whole three phase set of *Let's* was in a way a big good practice. In this part of our report we would like to identify the features that made *Let's Cycle* a transferable good practice.

It is planned that other stakeholders will join the organization of the next phase – “Let's Train”, such as “SALTO Participation, SALTO Training & Cooperation and SALTO Cultural Diversity and other National Agencies of Youth in Action Programme.

First thing that is coming to mind, when thinking back to the process, is the fact that it would be impossible to successfully organise such a large scale process without effective cooperation of multiple institutions/ stakeholders involved. Actually when the first event of the cycle was organised in Marly le Roi (France), there were four institutions involved – SALTO EUROMED, French National Agency, SALTO EECA and SALTO

SEE and the European Commission as promoter and supporter.

The quality of the partnership and the involvement of institutions in the next two events were continuously increasing. During the second and third events Polish and Slovenian National Agencies joined the team of promoting institutions.

It was not always easy to come to decisions and to common sets of aims and objectives, where there was such a big variety of stakeholders involved, coming from different realities, with different priorities and different working styles. Successfully concluding this long-term process, all of them could state that the quality of their cooperation and communication increased and after each of the events it became easier to work with each other, to understand each other and to define a common strategy. After this three-year exercise it became something more tangible for all the institutions involved. The process of *Let's Train* in 2010 has a much more solid foundation than before the start of *Let's Cycle*.

Here one of the most important outcomes is the fact that the involved institutions got a great chance to get more acquainted with each other's realities face-to-face, and those assumptions which had been clear for them

before received a concrete shape. People's direct contact, joint work and informal time together brought the three National Agencies and the three Regional SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres much closer. At the end of this set of events they can be proud of their cooperation and communication.

National Agencies and SALTO Resource Centres had a chance to communicate and work together before, whereas in the organizational process there was another agent which was new to all of them and to which they were also mostly new. This was the team of facilitators of the events. Another feature of the *Let's Cycle* making it a good practice amongst the other such large-scale projects was the excellent format of cooperation and communication between the institutions involved and the team of facilitators.

After the first event in Marly le Roi it was clear that we were actually talking about an extended team of stakeholders involved in the organization (representatives of the institutions plus the team of facilitators).

It would be interesting to analyse the base of such approach and the factors contributing to it. The first and the most important one was the fact that the traditional approach to team and stakeholders cooperation such as "those who order an event" and "those who are implementing the order with maximum of professionalism" was challenged with a huge

number of professionals coming from various institutions and quite motivated to contribute and cooperate instead of instruct the facilitators on "how to..." and then move to the supervising status.



And actually, it appeared that it is the appropriate solution while dealing with such a large-scale event bringing in such a cross-regional variety from different parts of the world. Of course the two parts of the team were operating not in the same mode and not all the time all together (which would be practically impossible), but instead there was a situation where it was clear where and how each person involved in the process could contribute. Representatives of institutions were totally aware of the workflow and the moments where their support and contribution were needed. The team of facilitators knew that they could count on the other members of "extended team" whenever it was needed and received a quite supportive approach from them.

The pedagogical approach and formats of work selected were also supportive towards

maximizing the communication and involvement of all the various types of stakeholders involved. This led to a unique atmosphere of dialogue and mutual support, where participants could address their questions and receive support from the staff of National Agencies, communicate with highest officials of European Commission and other European institutions during the coffee breaks or clarify specific questions on their Region/country with the representatives of Regional SALTO Resource Centres.



This process was equally important and useful for the representatives of the stakeholder institutions as they had the rare chance to receive feedback from their direct beneficiaries, to understand their local realities and to reflect upon the issues of adjusting their policies and support schemes according to the needs of their target groups.

Another strong point of this set of events was the composition of the team of facilitators, which was directly reflecting the cross-regional nature of the events. Everything was done to provide facilitators/trainers from all the regions involved in the Youth in Action

Programme. This was giving a possibility to the facilitation team to have expertise on all the different cultural realities relating to the set of events, also providing maximal visibility to its cross-regional scope. As mentioned before, it was not an easy task to synchronise different working and communicating styles of the members of the team coming from quite different cultural realities, but successful solution of this challenge was another important result which was evaluated quite high by all the members of the facilitators' team, as well as by participants.

Let's Cycle was an excellent example of a large-scale and long-term process where the political and pedagogical approaches were combined and were supporting each other. According to the philosophy of the Youth in Action Programme the methodological base of the events was based on the principles and methods of non-formal education where the participants were the main source of the information, good practice, initiatives and critical/reflective moments.

Besides better informing the participants on the policies, organised face-to-face meetings with people directly involved in creating those policies (youth workers and youth leaders usually only see these policies on the paper) contributed a lot to the better understanding of the human aspect behind the policies. After such an experience of talking directly to those people which are saying "yes" or "no" to their

projects, having a coffee break with officials of European Commission directly developing and carrying out the political aspects of the Youth in Action Programme, the participants became more equipped to communicate and share their problems and solutions with the main institutions involved in the realization of the Programme than before. Before these people for them were merely “some important names on official papers with logos”.

Another interesting feature of the *Let's Cycle* was its strategic approach developed after the first event in France. All the large-scale events seek for a follow-up. It is really important to be sure that the results are multiplied, that the initiatives are followed-up, implemented and evaluated, partnerships are developed and measured with their results, but it is extremely hard to check if it is happening or not. The logical framework of *Let's Cycle* was not only supporting the solution of the aforementioned problem but was concretely designed to provide this solution to the maximal extent.

Of course most of the participants of each event were newcomers and a small amount was from the participants of previous events: this was quite challenging. But due to

extensive communication and preparation of selected participants before the measures, providing the participants from previous events a possibility to share their impressions, as well as each time introducing the previous experiences and the logical framework, it became possible to keep the spirit of the *Let's Cycle* and benefit from it even having this flow of participants.

The general evaluation by the participants, team and institutions involved showed that adding a logical/strategic framework to this three-year long-term process contributed a lot to the effectiveness and accumulation of better results.

Summarising we can state that the *Let's Cycle* was a very interesting exercise which is important not to leave on the shelves and to proceed to other stuff, sometimes inventing and reinventing the wheel, but it would be good to take its results and lessons learnt into consideration especially while working on the challenging topic of cross-regional cooperation as well as in organization of alike large-scale projects in general.



6. The follow up: Let's train

What is next?



At the end the *Let's Cycle* becomes a spiral. There is a next chapter already foreseen for the

neighbouring cooperation strategy in the youth field: *Let's train with our Neighbours*.

This new process, that will start already during 2010, will consist of three training courses organised in parallel by the three regional SALTO Resource Centres in cooperation with the National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme already involved (France, Slovenia, Poland).

This new phase of the *Let's* process will welcome on board as organisers also new

stakeholders: other SALTO resource Centres (like SALTO Participation, SALTO Training & Cooperation and SALTO Cultural Diversity) and other National Agencies. It will be the chance to enlarge the ownership and redefine the identity of the *Let's* long-term strategic cooperation.

The three training courses will be run involving participants from all Neighbouring Regions. They will be long term trainings (including training phase, project implementation with coaching and evaluation) focusing on specific topics, related to quality aspects of the cooperation and relevant for the different Regions.

1. Civil society, participation, democracy

Promoted by SALTO EuroMed, the French National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme and SALTO Participation

The aim of this long term training course is, on one hand, to promote reflection, debate, exchange and action on democracy and participation issues and, on the other hand, to support the development of qualitative youth cooperation and networking on the specific issues addressed.

The training course wishes to present an innovative perspective of democracy in the European Neighbouring Policy Initiative (ENPI) area, starting from participants' experiences, offering them tools and coaching during the whole process of the project, from its development to the evaluation.



2. Peace Education

Promoted by SALTO EECA (Eastern Europe and Caucasus), the Polish National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme and SALTO Cultural Diversity

This training activity wants to support the development of competences that youth workers need for peace building. As main purposes, it aspires to explore youth work experiences and developments in conflict areas/situations (social, economical, political,

intercultural, etc.); to increase skills and abilities in peace building through youth work; to create partnerships for future projects within Youth in Action Programme focused on peace building.

3. Recognition of Non Formal Education and employability in youth work

Promoted by SALTO SEE (South East Europe), the Slovenian National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme and SALTO Training & Cooperation

The aim of the training activity is to provide participants from the Programme Countries and the countries of South East Europe, EuroMed and Eastern Europe and Caucasus a possibility to explore the potential of non-formal education in the frame of the Youth in Action Programme and its link to employability.

In the three training courses some common elements will ensure the coherency and identity of the overall project, among them:

- The European Neighbourhood Policy
- The European Union Enlargement
- Some basic information about the 3 Neighbouring Regions
- Youth in Action regional specificities (EuroMed Youth Programme, Balkan Window etc.)

- Youth in Action technicalities for Regions
- Understandings of non formal education
- SALTO Resource centres presentation
- Recognition of non formal education (Youthpass, etc.)

This ambitious training project will allow everybody to make a step forward after the *Let's Cycle* adventure. It will bring on board of the "Neighbours ship" old and new people, practitioners and institutions, new ideas and projects, fresh and creative inspiration.

All the new *Let's* people will have the chance to meet and share the achievements of their cooperation in a big event that will open a further phase of the *Let's* process.



Let's Cycle



SALTO-YOUTH
EASTERN EUROPE AND CAUCASUS
RESOURCE CENTRE



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