here2stay

a handbook on non-formal learning and its social recognition

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About the authors

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Miki works as a trainer in the International Synergy Group. He has worked in the non-governmental sector in Greece for the past four years. In 2009 he founded Global Soma Youth Association (http://globalsoma.com), which he defines as a space for creativity, self-expression and innovation in youth work. The organisation is doing media education and personal development trainings in Europe and in Thessaloniki, Greece.

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Find this publication online: www.kidsinaction.gr and www.my-learning.gr. Possible updates and translations will be also placed there.

We would appreciate your feedback. Use the relevant tools in the above web sites to let us know what you think.

fore re word

I n 1997, when I started being involved in "non-formal learning" activities, I had no awareness of the term, its meaning and applicability. Today, after many years of practice, I still find it difficult to explain what it means to the vast majority of the people I socialize with.

Somewhere in the beginning of the new millennium this inability to explain and make people understand led me to action. I told myself: "Why keep struggling with words? Why don't you throw some in the deep waters?" I just meant that the best way to fight the frustration caused by the gap between what I wanted to transfer (e.g. Non-formal learning is… I did "that" in the youth exchange… I learnt "this" in the work camp) and what has been received and decoded in reality (what new did you buy from the airport? A new love affair?) was to invite some of my closest friends, to *be a part of it*.

It worked perfectly fine. We now speak, if not the same language, then at least when saying "youth exchange", we all understand one thing and its neither related to trade nor to the blending of body fluids!

This anecdote and the work you hold in your hands (and what's behind it) are only some steps away from each other; logical, chronological and steps related to growing experience, evolution and relevant networking. Nonetheless, what has been and still is sought after is to demonstrate one and the same thing: that there is much more to those activities than outsiders' "ill-conceived non formalities" of any sort!

I am curious how this publication will work, in terms of clarifications, a deeper understanding, and also the promotion and visibility of the *art & practice* of non-formal learning… It's a handbook, sort of.

It is addressed to anyone and everyone, with special focus on young adults, NGO staff, educators, youth policy-makers, youth trainers and researchers or *anyone with an interest in what happens to young people through and after non-formal learning*. You are all invited to read through!

The *Here2stay* handbook is built up in a way to give something to everyone: some parts will appeal to those who love details and a sound theory (chapters 1, 2 and 5), others to those who prefer a global outlook on things and a touch-and-feel approach (chapter 3 & 4). It is a "pick-and-read" tool with a common thread, a unifying theme: *recognition of non-formal learning in the youth field*.

It comes in a moment when many actions have been undertaken by major international institutions (UN, EU, CoE to name a few) to promote recognition of non-formal learning.

It comes from an NGO, a stakeholder in the identification and validation process .[1]

It comes out *because youth organisations should regularly publicise the wide range of non-formal learning opportunities: documentation and public presentation of the outcomes of non-formal learning projects should be an integral part of their activities* (White Paper on Youth, EC, 2001).

It comes out also as a tribute to something that positively influences the life of thousands of young people. Undoubtedly, mine.

Lastly it comes out as the climax of a project run for, by and with young people.

It came a long way.

And it is here.

To stay.

Step inside!

Athanasios (Sakis) Krezios

what's in this book?

In the second part of this Foreword we have unfolded the *Here2Stay* project step by step, from conception to completion and follow up. Might be a good example to follow or just an interesting read.

But firstly, a few words about each chapter.

In *Chapter 1*, we have collected a set of definitions aiming at clarifying the conceptual foundations of non-formal learning. We won't reinvent the wheel. There have been so many writings regarding the term and its *art & practice* that the last thing the world needs is new combinations of complex thoughts. What we might well need, however, is a neat categorization of what already exists and... access!

In *Chapter 2*, we have included what we call the *core* of the project: a research, including questionnaires and focus groups, about the value young people of urban Greece give to different learning opportunities, inlcuding non-formal learning. Very intriguing results.

In *Chapter 3*, we have included what is probably going to be the most visually attractive reading: real life stories showing the value sourced in and positive energy coming from participating in non-formal learning activities.

Chapter 4 gives a practical example on how to incorporate efficiently and effectively the self-assessment element (and the framework of the 8 Key Competences) into a training course, run under the terms and conditions of Youth in Action programme. We used it back in October 2007 and have tested it several times since. We are positive that it will be handy for trainers and organizers of non-formal learning activities who will provide participants with a "Youthpass" certificate.

Finally, *Chapter 5* lists some interesting further reading.

table of contents

Thoughts and deeds

here2stay

Our belief is that this work is a genuine effort and contribution for the meaningful evolution of our community into a peaceful place where diversity is respected and where education is focused on the needs and aspirations of every individual.

forereword

Take the resources and the outcomes of a major conference.[2] Blend them with a very inspiring training course introducing a non-formal learning validation instrument.[3] Expose this mix for a little while in the forests of Vienna and in the mild December weather in Greece. To add a touch of the Balkans, put in some "Hajde da…".[4] Bake it together with the launch of a whole new European Community programme promoting non-formal learning and its recognition.[5] For dressing, add the ready willingness of the NGO *Kids in Action* to demonstrate and popularize the benefits of participation in non-formal learning activities.

What you'll get, is *Here2Stay. A step towards recognition of non-formal learning in Greece.* New Order would have never believed that the title of their song could inspire a process like this one, would they?

the best moment to start is now

Two days after the end of the training course mentioned above, a meeting took place. We elaborated on the ideas on how to build up on the changes that Youthpass may bring about. We decided to do something meaningful for ourselves, for other young people, and youth organizations around us (and beyond).

Meeting followed meeting, e-mail followed e-mail. Eventually, a dedicated task force within *Kids in Action* came to life and created a conceptual framework for the project. The scheme on the right visualizes the step by step approach and the actions we decided to take. It also shows the commonly agreed conceptual foundation.

So far it's been a wonderful journey and the new destinations are going to be many. Above all, it's been much more than a project. *Here2Stay* is a way to positively and meaningfully change the attitudes and the perceptions of young people towards learning and civil society.

We have included the most universal results of the project in this publication, simply because "it worked" and it might be inspiring for some people to do something similar. Why start from scratch when others have already laid the foundations?

We thank the dedicated contribution of all the people involved in this project: Christina Tzekou, Aristodimos Paraschou, Olga Kiriakidou, Nenna Okeke, Tania Chatziioannou, Danai Tikou, Giorgos Georgiadis, Afroditi Gavriil, Stella Saratsi.

**Athanasios (Sakis) Krezios
Miki Ambrozy**

The web site www.my-learning.gr will record the latest developments of both *Here2Stay* and the audiovisual "sister" project. The official web site of Kids in Action www.kidsinaction.gr will also post information on every development.

the process behind this handbook

We prepared the conceptual framework of the research in addition to some practical tasks such as creating the questionnaires, arranging times and places for interviewing people. ***Admittedly, it has been a challenging stage, one that included lots of learning***. The task force learned through direct experience how a small scale quantitative research is carried out from scratch to data input.

On the basis of the first results, we created a focus group interview script that formed the basis of the qualitative part of the research.
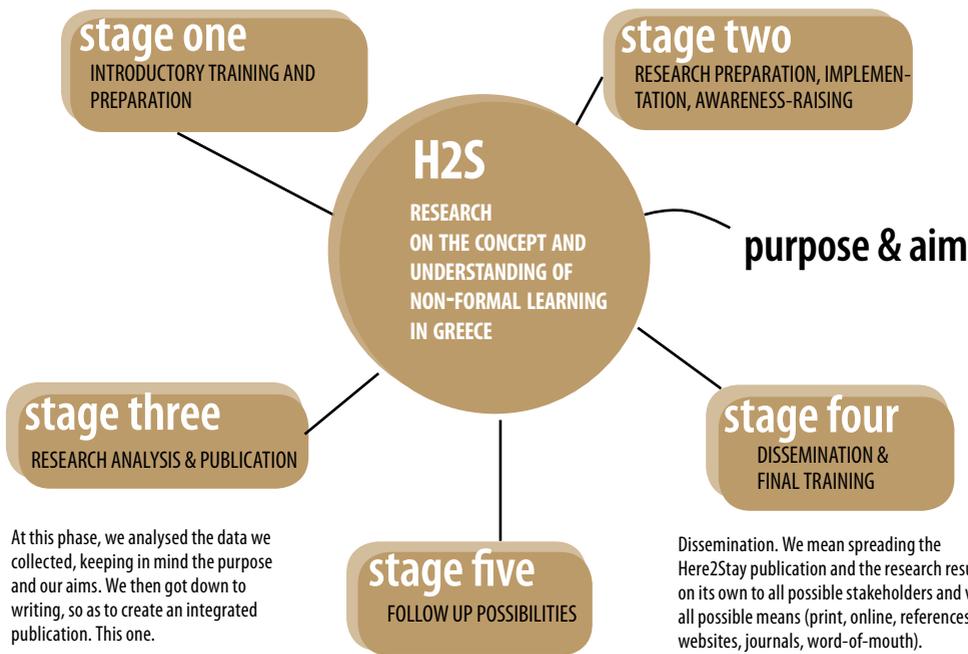
The task force participated in a short training on what is non-formal learning through practical examples and the latest developments related to Youthpass and the Key Competences.[6]

The team decided upon the stages below and created a common working culture (meetings, communication, tasks).

stage one
INTRODUCTORY TRAINING AND PREPARATION

stage two
RESEARCH PREPARATION, IMPLEMENTATION, AWARENESS-RAISING

H2S
RESEARCH ON THE CONCEPT AND UNDERSTANDING OF NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN GREECE

purpose & aim

stage three
RESEARCH ANALYSIS & PUBLICATION

stage four
DISSEMINATION & FINAL TRAINING

At this phase, we analysed the data we collected, keeping in mind the purpose and our aims. We then got down to writing, so as to create an integrated publication. This one.

stage five
FOLLOW UP POSSIBILITIES

Dissemination. We mean spreading the Here2Stay publication and the research results on its own to all possible stakeholders and via all possible means (print, online, references on websites, journals, word-of-mouth).

We also had some practical training on how to implement Youthpass and work with the Key Competences in a training course or youth exchange of the Youth in Action programme. Theory was turned into practice when we (Sakis and Miki) live-tested the ideas during a training course in Greece (see Chapter 5). Just as well, the rest of the task force is now considered to be qualified "Youthpass specialists".

This is an ongoing, dynamic, open-ended phase. So far, one offspring of this project is called MyLearning. This project explores the benefits of non-formal learning in personal development, using audiovisual media as a tool, mainly by creating a documentary with youth about their own lives. It's been funded by the Council of Europe's European Youth Foundation.[7]

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[6] *For more on Key Competences go to Chapter 5*

[7] *See European Youth Foundation at www.coe.int/youth*

what is non-formal

learning?

A concise guide to the history, promoters and definitions of non-formal learning

Definitions constitute foundations and compasses. We reached out to grab some from the tree of conceptualization of an indisputably intriguing term and bring them fresh to you. Additional material are provided to assist you in understanding deeper and also seeing at recognition through a historical perspective (a more practical perspective is given in Chapter 3).

Non-formal learning…can you tell?

the concept and promoters of non-formal learning

athanasios (sakis) krezios

There is nothing so practical as a good theory... said Kurt Lewin. In these pages we aim to provide you with a good amount of it!

The concept of non-formal education was born in the late sixties, at a time when it emerged that *formal educational systems had adapted too slowly to the socio-economic changes around them*.[1] Since then, the developments in the field are vast. Just like the ways in which the concept is being practised and exercised; from literacy programmes in Africa to intercultural youth mobility programmes in Europe. Whatever the application of the concept is, one thing is for sure: non-formal education and the active participation inherent in it has an incalculable value to the development of young people's (and not only) personality, activity in the social context and employability.[2]

Another thing is also certain: the ongoing dispute about the terms non-formal learning or non-formal education. Practitioners use the terms interchangeably, despite the dispute. For them it means one and the same thing; learning and development opportunities for young people, which are participatory, intentional, voluntary, learner-centred, holistic in terms of the learning domains stimulated and which promote the values of democratic life. In my opinion, we lose sight of the forest for the tree if we focus so much on how the term should be. In brief, hard-liners consider education strictly as a provision from the State. More compromising approaches make the distinction between learning, with a focus on the process (what is happening?) and education, with the focus on the context (who is offer-

ing it?). Nevertheless, there seems to be no practical significance in telling them apart. From the documents of international institutions one can not really decide if and which one will be used exclusively in the future, although recent EU documents use the term *learning* more often than in the past.

My purpose here is to clarify how institutions look at the term and its practice. It's not a dissertation on non-formal learning, rather a collection of definitions from different sources. For every input made, I have inserted my personal thoughts in order to wishfully help the reader clarify further. All the necessary references are provided (here and also at the end of this book) as easily accessible as possible (one-click access in the electronic version) in case you want to dig deeper.

Before getting started, please consider the following two comments:

a) Writing a definition is an art in itself. Therefore it might end up being either a pain in the eye or delicious food for the brain. If something is not understandable at first glimpse, it will probably be understood after going through the rest of definitions (at the end of the day, the foundations and the basic elements are the same) or even better, by looking up the source. Honestly, my hope is that this chapter will help you to understand the term, without encouraging you to memorize the definitions as if they are extracts from your favourite book!

b) As you will notice in the references provided, a

variety of institutions have interest in the "art & practice" of non-formal learning. This multifaceted interest proves, among others, that non-formal learning and its recognition is *here to stay*. It's not fireworks neither a shooting star; it's not a trend neither the next empty promise (hopefully) for the ever growing unemployment and social discomfort.

My belief is that it's a genuine effort for the meaningful evolution of our societies into more peaceful ones where diversity is respected and the needs and aspirations of the people living in them are

their focal points. Beyond definitions, I have compiled a Timeline on the recognition process. Certainly, not everything is there, but it's a good starting point for those who want to have an overview and a clearer picture.

If you just started your activity in the field of non-formal learning may this chapter be a helping hand; if you have been doing this for long may this be a point of reference!

European Commission, 2004

Formal learning

It's easier to understand non-formal learning if you look at it in comparison with other modes of learning (something that we will see in other definitions as well). The authors here make the distinctions according to 3 blocks: structure, intention and certification. For the latter, the word *typically* in the second paragraph, leaves it open both for the fact that in some cases certificates are given and also for the forthcoming (after 2006) Youthpass certificate.

Learning that occurs in an organized and structured context (in a school/training centre or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to certification.

Non-formal learning

Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically does not lead to certification.

Informal learning

Learning resulting from daily work-related, family or leisure activities. It is not organized or structured (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification.

Taken from "Common European Principles for Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning", Brussels, May 2004. European Commission.

[1] *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education, http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-nonfor.htm*

[2] *Resolution 2006/C 168/01 [. . .] on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field, p.2*

Partnership between Council of Europe and European Commission, 2004

Formal learning

In specific cases the youth sector / youth work acts as a substitute, alternative education and training provider (e.g. in second chance schools and similar projects), mainly for school drop-outs, early school leavers, disaffected young people or other young people at risk. The learning process is structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time, learning support and it is intentional; the participants get certificates and/or diplomas.

Non-formal learning

Learning outside institutional contexts (out-of-school) is the key activity, but also key competence of the youth field. Non-formal learning in youth activities is structured, based on learning objectives, learning time and specific learning support and it is intentional. For that reason one could also speak of non-formal education. It typically does not lead to certification, but in an increasing number of cases, certificates are delivered.

Informal learning

Learning in daily life activities, in work, family, leisure is mainly learning by doing; it is typically not structured and not intentional and does not lead to certification. In the youth sector informal learning takes place in youth and leisure initiatives, in peer group and voluntary activities etc. It provides learning opportunities, in particular of social, cultural and personal "soft" skills.

From "Pathways towards validation and recognition of education, training and learning in the youth field" Partnership between Council of Europe and European Commission, February 2004

In this highly influential document we see that the authors look at the three modes of learning through a youth work perspective. This mirrors the specific interest in the field that the Partnership has. It's important to mention that here non-formal learning is explicitly structured and with specific learning objectives. There is a connection with the part of our introduction speaking about the debate and the reference that "one could also speak of non-formal education". With regards to certification, the word *typically* exists again but it's clearly mentioned that not giving a certificate is not an unbreakable rule.

> ***Formal education****: the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system', running from primary school through the university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialised programmes and institutions for full-time technical and professional training.*
>
> ***Coombs, P. H. with Prosser, C. and Ahmed, M. 1973***

Reading explicitly "who" is a possible provider of non-formal learning opportunities is not usual in definitions. Unexpectedly for some, the catalogue contains structures beyond what we call "civil society" (NGOs, associations, unions) such as private tutoring for examinations!

Another, interesting reference is the word *complement*; the complementarity of the 3 modes of learning should be sought after and achieved in a lifelong and lifewide (especially) learning philosophy. While this means that non-formal learning will probably become more "formal" (keeping also in mind the validation and recognition process), practice has demonstrated that opposite opinions, seeing non-formal learning in its own, have been given birth. Institutions are already aware of the "danger" of over-formalization of non-formal learning and have stated that *non-formal learning in the youth sector must keep its unconventional, innovative and attractive character.*[3]

European Commission, 2000

Formal learning

Formal learning takes place in education and training institutions, leading to recognized diplomas and qualifications.

Non-formal learning

Non-formal learning takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to formalised certificates. Non-formal learning may be provided in the workplace and through the activities of civil society organisations and groups (such as in youth organisations, trade unions and political parties). It can also be provided through organisations or services that have been set up to complement formal systems (such as arts, music and sports classes or private tutoring to prepare for examinations).

Informal learning

Informal learning is a natural accompaniment to everyday life. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not necessarily intentional learning, and so may well not be recognised even by individuals themselves as contributing to their knowledge and skills.

From "A memorandum on life long learning", European Commission staff working paper, Brussels, October 2000

[3] *See more in the document "Pathways towards validation and recognition" referenced in the previous page.*

UNESCO, March 2006

Formal learning

Formal learning is usually understood to consist of intentional learning that occurs within an organized and structured context (pre-school, primary and secondary school, technical colleges and university, in-company training) and that is designed as learning. It may lead to a formal recognition (diploma, certificate).

Non-formal learning

Non-formal learning consists of learning embedded in planned, organised and sustained education activities that are outside formal education institution, responding to education needs for persons of all ages. The purpose of NFE is to provide alternative learning opportunities for those who do not have access to formal schooling or need specific life skills and knowledge to overcome different obstacles. Non-formal learning is also intentional from the learner's point of view, as opposed to incidental or random types of learning.

Informal learning

Informal learning implies the process of learning which goes on continuously and incidentally for each individual, outside the organized situation of formal or non-formal education.

From "Synergies between formal and non-formal education", UNESCO, March 2006

A great example of how different institutions see at non-formal learning. Although the constitutional elements remain the same (intentional, planned & organized activities, outside formal… etc) the purpose here is straight forward: *learning opportunities for those who do not have access to formal schooling or need specific life skills and knowledge to overcome different obstacles.* While the former has less relevance in the Western world (the majority has access to formal schooling), the latter matches a lot with the inclusion strategy process as initiated by the European Commission for the "Youth in Action" programme.[4]

[4] *Brussels 2nd May 2007, EAC/D2/JM/PG/D5109/2004/JEUNE KEY DOC/001 (2007) "Inclusion strategy of the "Youth in Action" programme (2007 – 2013)*

[5] *Contact European Youth Forum at www.youthforum.org. The authors were unable to find this document online.*

European Youth Forum, 2003

A very compact and concise definition that stresses the participatory and voluntary components of non-formal education. Although the term education is used here, the European Youth Forum, in publications after the one mentioned, has offered analyses and explanations for the terms non-formal learning and non-formal education (such as in the Report – *Inaugural dialogue meeting on Non-formal education: "Bridging non-formal education stakeholders, labour market and decision makers in the field of employment*[5]**).**

While **formal education** is typically provided by formal education institutions and is sequentially and hierarchically structured leading to certification, **non-formal education** is an organised educational process which takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to certification. Individuals participate on a voluntary basis and as a result, the individual takes an active role in the learning process. Unlike **informal education** where learning happens less consciously, the individual is usually aware of the fact that he/she is learning through non-formal education.

From p.3 of "Policy paper on youth organizations as non-formal educators – recognizing our roles", Nov. 2003, European Youth Forum

Council of Europe, 2000

Non-formal education may be defined as a planned programme of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competencies, outside but supplementary to the formal educational curriculum. Participation is voluntary and the programmes are carried out by trained leaders in the voluntary and/or public sectors, and should be systematically monitored and evaluated. The experience might also be certificated. It is generally related to the employability and lifelong learning requirements of the individual young person, and may require in addition to the youth work sector, the involvement of a range of government or non governmental agencies responsible for the needs of young people.

From CDEJ Working group on non-formal education and social cohesion, which is given at "Towards a revitalization of non-formal learning for a changing Europe" Report of the Council of Europe Youth Directorate Symposium on Non-Formal Education, October 2000

One of the most comprehensive definitions so far, taken from a very "suggested-to-read" document. It's been around for long and it has influenced deeply others' efforts for the development of definitions and consequently, understanding. Important elements of this definition are that *programmes are carried out* **by trained leaders** *and that [programmes] should be systematically monitored and evaluated*. The former highlights the existence of and contribution by competent actors (and maybe implies the need for the development of those, as well) in these programmes, while the latter brings forward the issue of quality (which is achieved by continuous evaluation).

OECD, 2006

Formal education

Formal education is defined as education provided in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions and that normally constitutes a continuous ladder of full-time education for children and young people, generally beginning at age 5 to 7 and continuing up to 20 or 25 years old or above. In some countries, the upper parts of this ladder consist of organized programmes of joint part-time employment and part-time participation in the regular school and university system: such programmes have come to be known as the "dual system", or other equivalent terms, in these countries.

Non-formal education

Non-formal education is defined as any organised and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the above definition of formal education. Non-formal education may therefore take place both within and outside educational institutions, and cater to persons of all ages. Depending on country contexts, it may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life skills, work skills and general culture. Non-formal education programmes do not necessarily follow the ladder system, and may have a differing duration.

Informal education

Informal education is education that is not organised. Informal learning can be either intentional (e.g. participation in short lectures or reading books or journals) or unintentional (occurring by chance or as a by-product of everyday activities)

In these definitions, the country-specific element prevails and gives us some examples on how non-formal education is used and what are the purposes it serves (impart adult literacy...). As well, it's interesting to read that *non-formal education may therefore take place within and outside educational institutions.* This observation takes the approach of complementarity one step further; non-formal blends with formal and the result is better education to persons of all ages.

Non-formal education: any organised educational activity outside the established formal system - whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity - that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives.

Coombs, P. H. with Prosser, C. and Ahmed, M. 1973

From "Education at a glance 2006" Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), September 2006

Council of Europe, 2007

Non-formal education and learning :
a key youth policy and youth work approach

Structural features	Methodological features	Basic values	Key competences of non-formal learning practitioners
• takes place outside the structures of the formal education system and differs from this in the way it is organised and the type of recognition this learning confers; • intentional and voluntary; • aims above all to convey and practice the values and skills of democratic life.	• balanced co-existence and interaction between cognitive, affective and practical dimensions of learning; • linking individual and social learning, partnership-oriented solidarity and symmetrical teaching/learning relations; • participatory and learner-centred; • close to real life concerns, experimental and oriented to learning by doing, using intercultural exchanges and encounters as learning devices.	Values linked to personal development • autonomy; • critical attitude; • openness and curiosity; • creativity. Values linked to social development • communication capacity; • participation and democratic • citizenship; • solidarity and social justice; • responsibility; • conflict resolution. Ethical values • • tolerance and respect for others; • • human rights; • • intercultural learning and understanding; • peace/non-violence education; • gender equality; • inter-generational dialogue.	• using collegial and participatory methods; • using diversity as a positive learning tool; • making critically reflective links between the concrete and the abstract, in order both to facilitate the learning process and continuously to improve their quality; • knowledge about young people's lives and cultures in Europe.

Although not strictly a definition, it constitutes, to my belief, the most comprehensive, accurate, practical and useful approach so far. Nothing is missing. The last column is of great significance once, as in the CDEJ definition above, it brings into the discussion those involved in non-formal learning from a practitioner's perspective. The "Portfolio" is a one of a kind development in the field and we encourage everyone to go through it.

European Commission, Youth in Action, 2010

Non-formal learning

Non-formal learning refers to the learning which takes place outside formal educational curriculum. Non-formal learning activities involve people on a voluntary basis and are carefully planned, to foster the participants' personal and social development.

Informal learning refers to the learning in daily life activities, in work, family, leisure, etc. It is mainly learning by doing. In the youth sector, informal learning takes place in youth and leisure initiatives, in peer group and voluntary activities etc.

Non-formal and informal learning enables young people to acquire essential competences and contributes to their personal development, social inclusion and active citizenship, thereby improving their employment prospects. Learning activities within the youth field provide significant added value for young people as well as for the economy and society at large.

Non-formal and informal learning activities within the Youth in Action Programme are complementary to the formal education and training system. They have a participative and learner-centred approach, are carried out on a voluntary basis and are therefore closely linked to young people's needs, aspirations and interests. By providing an additional source of learning and a route into formal education and training, such activities are particularly relevant to young people with fewer opportunities.

From the Youth in Action Programme Guide, valid as of 1st of January 2010

Not a definition but more a description on how "Youth in Action", a major mechanism for the provision of non-formal learning opportunities within the European Union and beyond, looks at the term, the concept and the principles behind it. It's very interesting that non-formal and informal learning are repeatedly mentioned together. "Youth in Action" is a programme that involves mobility, initiative, participation and in general, many possibilities for action in different life domains (personal, social, professional) therefore informal learning is constantly present. The process of validation and recognition refers to both learning modes and it seems that it is about time that youth work practitioners (especially those related to the Programme) should start using the terms together, not separately (while they maintain a clear understanding of the meanings of both).

Taken from a 1987 publication from the World Bank, we have included this "attempt" to definition for historical reasons; but not exclusively. The statement in the beginning about the term expressing what those activities are (what the content is) **not**, demonstrates one side (the symbolic one) about why they are not so socially recognized even after 20, 30 or 40 years of existence; simply because society tends to turn its back to things that *are not*. Especially to those that they are *not formal*. Shall we consider reformulating the term? And what possible alternatives could be? Would it be worth it? Would you ever describe something as positive as sports, as *non-physical stillness*? Maybe, it's just semantics but some love to play with those! Non-formal education remains even today, undoubtedly, a convenient term…

World Bank, 1987

Non-formal education

"Non-formal education" is a convenient term for certain educational activities, but it expresses what those activities are not rather than what they are. No definition of the term is without some opening for controversy. […] education and training of out-of-school youth and adults in groups, classes, courses and activities structured and planned for the promotion of learning (including individual self-tutoring), but not constituting part of the formal system and not specifically leading to formal qualifications such as diplomas or specific trade standards. It concentrates on short education and training programmes of a few days, weeks or even months but not as long as a full academic year. However, all adult literacy programmes of any kind are included.

From Review of World Bank Operations in Non-formal Education and Training, Ralph I. Romain & Lenor Armstrong, February 1987

Although we didn't extract any definition from it, you are highly encouraged to go through the publication "***Methods and Techniques used in Intercultural Youth Projects***", found here:

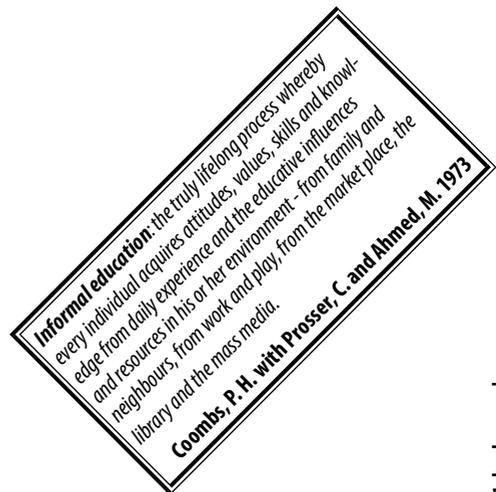http://www.salto-youth.net/static/downloads/toolbox_downloads.php/233/ToT_ICL_Manual.pdf

and especially in pages 61 – 66 for some extra input in the topic. This very thorough and analytical work has been done by a practitioner in the field (an NGO, a group of trainers) and therefore its value is of significant importance.

Informal education: the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment - from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the market place, the library and the mass media. **Coombs, P. H. with Prosser, C. and Ahmed, M. 1973**

The "Here2stay" project team has also made their contribution to defining non-formal learning according to our experiences of participation in programmes and activities of such nature. Here is then our definition:

Non-formal learning is:

- » Non-stressful learning
- » Learning things of personal interest that cannot be found in the formal context
- » Development of social skills
- » Learning to appreciate the difference/diversity
- » Learning to work in a team
- » Taking initiatives
- » Results of non-formal learning processes are more global/ spherical; a diversity of actors contribute (heterogeneity)
- » Based on the needs of the human being
- » Communication
- » Offering possibilities for fostering open-mindedness
- » Acquaintances and friendships beyond one's "neighbour-hood"
- » Learning cultures from the "inside"
- » Learning through having fun
- » About being active contributor not passive receptor
- » Volunteering
- » Learning for your self
- » Makes you creative
- » Makes you realize your own needs
- » Develops self-responsibility

Social recognition points to the status and esteem ('feel good factor') that individuals, organisations or sectors receive as a consequence of displaying certain characteristics, reaching certain achievements or engaging in certain activities – such as learning. It might also extend to material rewards, such as higher incomes for those with higher level qualifications.

Codified recognition: for education and training purposes, regardless of sector and level, this term specifies a formal and often official (including legal) recognition of learning participation or outcomes, such as a certificate or a diploma.

Terminology Cheat Sheet by Lynne Chisholm, Bridges for Recognition report [http://www.salto-youth.net/download/630/reportbridges.pdf], page 46

All links to the above events and/or documents are also provided in Chapter 5!

recognition in europe timeline

YEAR	EVENT
1998	Establishment of the Partnership between European Commission and the Council of Europe about "Youth worker and Youth leader training".
2000	Beginning of the "Youth" programme, which stresses the element of non-formal learning in the activities run under its guidelines
2000	The Lisbon Strategy. It sets out EU to become the most dynamic knowledge based economy by 2010. It's follow up, considers validation and recognition of non-formal learning as crucial.
2000	A Memorandum on Life Long Learning, by the EC, states repeatedly the need for higher recognition and appreciation of the outcomes of participation in non-formal learning activities
2001	Adoption from the Ministers of Education of a report on the future objectives of education and training systems (Lisbon Strategy). Traditional barriers between non-formal and informal with formal learning should be overcome.
2001	A White Paper on Youth. The most vital document within the context of EU with regards to youth policy. Non-formal learning and its recognition is supported vastly by the young people (and beyond) who contributed to its compilation.
2002	The Copenhagen Declaration. Developing a set of common principles regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning…
2004	Pathways… A common effort between CoE and EC to define the steps towards validation and recognition of non-formal learning. Very influential work.
2004	Common European Principles for Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning, were defined by the "Working Group H" of the "Objectives" process (see above).
2005	Europass is out! In the future it will open its "embrace" for a youth-specific component.
2005	Bridges for recognition. A conference that significantly influenced and accelerated the whole process of recognition
2005	European Youth Pact. Developing, between Member States, closer cooperation on transparency and comparability of occupational qualifications and recognition of non-formal and informal education.
2006	Youthpass enters into a pilot test phase
2006	Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field.
2007	"Youth" programme is over. "Youth in Action" takes over. Non-formal and informal learning are more present and important than ever. Young people participating in several actions of the Programme are entitled to receive a Youthpass certificate
2007	The 'European Portfolio for youth workers and youth leaders" is out. The Council of Europe offers to the world of non-formal learning practitioners a tool for having their competencies (self-) assessed and their work recognized.
2008	European Qualifications Framework is adopted. The "shift" from learning incomes to learning outcomes in the educational milieu is highly supportive to the further recognition of non-formal learning.
2009	The Youthpass Guide is out. The Youthpass certificate becomes available to non-EU citizens (through Action 3.1 of the "Youth in Action" Programme).
2009	The renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) is adopted. The Commission and the member states are invited to make non-formal learning more visible, more used, more recognized, more linked with other types of learning … and more.

h2s research project

Two focus group interviews about how young Greeks see learning opportunities outside of school.

Volunteering without partying

Perception of non-formal learning by young adults in Greece

Conclusions from two focus group interviews

miki ambrozy

What concepts do young adults have about formal and non-formal learning? To whom do they assign the responsibility for providing the conditions for effective learning? How do they perceive non-formal learning if organised by civil society organisations (CSO)? The study below analyzes the results of two focus group interviews conducted in Thessaloniki (Greece) to answer these questions.

1   Introduction

The current interest in and discourses about formal and non-formal education / learning are the direct results of global socio-cultural trends. We use discourse to mean the sum of symbols that carry a meaning in the construction of everyday social practices (Wodak, 1997).

For the past two decades, the European Union's economic policy has been defined by responses to a growing and intensifying global competition. The pressure for economic competitiveness created its own educational theories and learning needs. By underlining the necessity for knowledge and lifelong learning, the discourse on non-formal learning promotes the educational needs of a market economy in need of flexible, re-trainable, learning labour force. This trend also assumes that we, as individuals, are responsible for our learning and continuous development.

On the other hand, the discourse on non-formal learning is one about the liberating potential of new forms of learning which are learner-centered, motivating, experi-

ence-based and in general inspiring because of their *informality*. Somewhat confusingly, this interpretation of non-formal learning is also promoted under the umbrella of lifelong learning in the European discourse on youth policies (du Bois-Reymond, 2004).

Historically, the function of non-formal learning was to compensate for the flaws of formal education. The method: using life experiences as a basis of learning. However, as one scholar observes, today in European documents non-formal learning/education "serves the function of an all round cure for all the deficiencies of the formal education system." Combining both of the above concepts, the discourse assumes that

> non-formal education, in the sense of the old meaning in adult education and youth work as well as in the new sense of being a 'learning container' for everything obligatory education does not provide, is supposed to bridge the *gap between formal education and lifelong learning* (du Bois-Reymond, 2004: 191).

The structure of the discourses about non-formal learning is defined by the relations between formal education and the youth services sector, vocational training and labour policies, national and European. The key actors in these structures and *their* definitions are enlisted in other parts of this publication (Chapter 2). The wide range of supranational organisations, government agencies, non-governmental bodies, private actors, not to mention the vast body of academic research available in various disciplines[1] all reflect the relevance and complexity of *learning* in late-modern societies.

One important milestone in European-level policy making for youth and (non)-formal education was laid with the introduction of the *Youthpass* certificate. This instrument is a tool for the self-assessment of individual learning in a non-formal learning programme, issued by the organisation running the programme. What it provides organisations with is an opportunity

to strengthen their social recognition, influence and status. As I will explain below, the significance of issuing certificates is perhaps amplified even more in the context of Greek society.

1.1 Formal education and certification in Greece

In Greece education is a matter of symbolic status. "Parents of all social levels demand [higher] education as a prerequisite for their children's social progress, a token of social status, or a substitute for the social and economic capital they themselves lack" (Deliyanni 1999:5, see also Mestheneos & Ioannidi-Kapolou, 2002).[2]

Recent comparative research conducted in Greece among upper-secondary, tertiary and vocational students, and young people already employed on the labour market suggests that the attitudes of Greek youth towards educational issues are remarkably homogenous. Greek youth holds a pragmatic and somewhat "narrow" image of education. Education is perceived as the sole path to a successful career, with the responsibility of success or failure resting on the shoulders of the individual and the family. The 'race' to university is symbolic of the over-valuing of academic qualifications and the consequent devaluing of technical and vocational education. In the social imagination, a direct instrumental connection is created between academic qualifications, social recognition and professional success (Koulaidis et al, 2006).

Another remarkable feature of the Greek educational system is the intensive presence of private

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1   See Du-Bois Reymond (2004) for a brief overview.

2   *In 2004 almost 51% of the 18-21 age group was enrolled in tertiary education (Unesco). The high demand for tertiary education also leads to the mass exodus of students who fail to enter university at home, thus the percentage of Greek students studying abroad is higher than in any other European country (Deliyanni 1999; Fokasz 2007).*

investment at secondary level. In the word of Koulaidis et al. "social injustice is brought in from the back door" because of the limited range and quality of the educational programmes within formal education (2006:357). In order to pass the entry exams to university, upper-secondary students attend preparatory courses in a number of subjects in private tuition centres.[3]

Consequently, the socio-economic situation of young people becomes a primary differentiating factor in attitudes to education. Empirical research results indicate the presence of the mechanisms of exclusion described by Zinnecker. He talks about a process of parallel socio-structural and ideological-cultural marginalisation: young people from lower status families have access to fewer resources for education and ideologically-culturally they experience a devalued childhood (Zinnecker, 1995; Koulaidis et al., 2006).

From the point of view of the qualitative research I present below, it was important to examine whether the young people in the focus groups reproduce the dominant discourses described above, namely that (1) only by accumulating certificates, credentials and academic diplomas can they achieve their professional ambitions, (2) that the admission or failed entry to university is a symbolic event with a great impact on young people's life, and (3) whether they reconstruct the "narrow" concept of education as the instrument for social recognition and professional success.

1.2   Participation in civil society

According to empirical evidence, social trust in public institutions and the political system is relatively low in Greece. The historical and cultural reasons for the low presence of social capital and interpersonal trust in society are well documented (see Sotiropoulos & Karamagioli, 2005; Mouzelis & Pagoulatos, 2002; and Tsoukalas, 1993).

What is important to point out is that the overwhelming dominance of the state in civil society[4] results in the low activity and visibility of civil society organisations (CSO), limited capacities for safeguarding their interests, and low voluntary participation in CSOs. This pattern is also mirrored in the domain of youth CSOs: participation is relatively low (despite recent trend of increase) and youth CSOs are constantly looking for successful ways of reaching and engaging their target group.

2   Background

3   These are called frontistiro in Greek. On average, the 15-17 age group spends 45 hours per week studying: 27 hours in the state school, 8 hours at home, and 10 hours in private tutoring institutions and with private tutors. This is the third highest in the survey of forty countries, with only Turkey and Russia ahead of Greece (OECD PISA 2003).

4   We define civil society, according to Sotiropoulos & Karamagioli as: "the space between the family, state and the market, where people come together to pursue their interests… [This definition] aims to go beyond the usual focus on formal and institutionalised CSOs, and to take account of informal coalitions and groups. (2005:15)"

The research below started as a local youth action. A small group of volunteers from the non-governmental organisation *Kids in Action* decided to share their personal experiences related to non-formal learning. They chose to have around 300 young people of Thessaloniki fill out questionnaires about *the learning potential of voluntary engagement with non-formal learning activities, such as youth camps and European mobility projects* (see Chapter 2, Appendix). The results were used to design the focus group interviews.

The pilot results indicated that the target group perceives many collective and voluntary, non-institutional learning activities in a positive way. The survey showed that activities like local lobbying, local cultural provision, voluntary work in heritage protection, non-professional drama groups, and international youth exchanges are seen in a positive light (see Appendix Two). At the same time, the NGO's everyday experience shows a relatively low participation and interest in the larger community in the activities that they organise.

In an earlier publication I have categorised Kids in Action, the CSO requesting this research, as a European-minded youth NGO.[5] They are committed to the values of non-violence, inclusion, active social participation, and the empowerment of the individual. Their mission also extends to the "construction of a Europe of knowledge", placing them in the context of the discourse described in the Introduction.

The everyday operation of the organisation shows a great degree of informality. From a sociological perspective, Kids in Action constitutes of a dynamic network of post-adolescent Greek youths, connected by friendship and voluntary or professional work experiences in youth trainings, children's animation and non-formal education. Members can be mobilised whenever the operational core team needs volunteers for a local event or an international programme. They

are a good example of young adults "who create a blend of different types of learning to have better opportunities in knowledge societies," labelled by du Bois-Reymond as *trendsetter learners* (2004: 194).

Through their values and activities, Kids in Action have been creating learning opportunities of varying nature and scope for the youth of the city since 2003. Their attitude towards learning follows the discourse of the European agents of non-formal learning, i.e. learning is the path to success in a knowledge-based society.

The research was designed to find out *what is the perception of the (learning) opportunities offered by the organisation (and the EU)?* Will young people see the benefits of youth mobility projects and other voluntary activities? How to increase participation and achieve better communication with the target group?

2.1   Research questions

The research was based on three main hypotheses:

> (1) First, we assume that young people's participation is low in programmes run by youth CSOs, because these are not regarded as a domain that provides learning opportunities.
>
> (2) Secondly, in the perception of the target group, knowledge gained out-of-school is not regarded as convertible into practical advantages and benefits in the future.
>
> (3) Consequently, we expect the target group to associate the idea of *useful learning* with concepts of formal education.

2.2 The method

The core of the research was made up of two focus groups. Focus groups are group interviews (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999; Kitzinger, 1994; Krueger, 1988; Morgan, 1993; Morgan & Krueger, 1998; Sim, 1998; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). They are focused on a certain theme and intend to explore it using different projective techniques.[6]

2.3 Group composition and context

We have created the two focus groups so as to be homogeneous for age (18-26), place of residence (Thessaloniki), gender (the one group had only male, the other female participants) and occupation (students in tertiary education). Homogeneous groups are believed to work better for group dynamics (McPhee & Terry, 2007; Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999; Morgan, 1993; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). We found some differences in the group dynamics of the male and female groups.

Participants[7]

The male group had 6 members and was to some extent dominated by one participant Kostandinos[8], which was counterbalanced by the moderator's conscious strategy to include all participants in the group. The female group had 8 members, including one participant with a slight "challenger" attitude, Evgenia. She was the only participant with little previous experience in volunteering in a CSO. She often positioned herself against the mainstream opinion, especially on the theme of volunteering.

Interactional factors

In the male group a great degree of conformity was observable. Spontaneous disagreements were rare and only came about towards the end of the focus. The group adopted a formal, almost "expert" attitude. They often used semi-formal phrases to refer to each others' ideas, frequently showing agreement, or underlining the private nature of a personal opinion, probably to avoid being challenged or confronted. The only participant

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6　　　　　Focus groups are usually group interviews of 6-12 participants. They take place in a neutral environment, such as an empty room or interviewing studio. The participants normally sit around a table, but recent market research trends suggest to remove the table in order to include body language in the analysis. The interview is directed by a moderator, whose role is to guide and facilitate the course of the focus group. Occasionally creative projection techniques are used to elicit spontaneous, uncensored reactions. Focus groups are most commonly used in market research to examine the effect of communications campaigns, the perception of brands and products etc. They are also used to develop political campaigns, public image and to test the potential effects of specific communication acts (e.g. government announcements). The method has become recognized in non-applied social science as well (sociology, social psychology, anthropology, political science).

7　　　　　We have put their detailed profile in Appendix One.

8　　　　　The names of all participants have been changed.

to frequently disagree was Kostandinos, though he was constantly "excusing" himself for it.

In the female group the opposite effect was observable: a much more relaxed attitude evolved early on, perhaps also due to the moderator being female and the same age (26). Disagreements were more frequent and the tone of the conversation was informal. Although the role of the expert was occasionally adopted by Despina in issues of parenting, no one was dominating the conversation on a permanent basis. The effect of social conformity was less marked, although in most topics they seemed to share similar experiences. When the majority disagreed with a minority, a compromise was achieved quickly, often by using humour to release the tension.

The moderator reminded both groups in the beginning and several times during the interviews that there are no right or wrong opinions, encouraging the free expression of ideas. We also used slips of paper to write down associations related to some topics, to make participants commit themselves to an answer without the majority influencing them.

Moderator and environment

The focus groups were conducted by a trained female moderator, with the assistance of the researcher (myself). She introduced herself as a Masters student at the local university, positioning herself on the same level with the group members. Still it is indicative that some male participants addressed her in the formal (plural in Greek).

The location was the interviewing studio of a market research company downtown Thessaloniki,[9] furnished in simple, elegant but expensive way. It is possible that the room was inhibiting in the beginning for some participants, on the other hand it gave a neutral feel to the interviews. We attach the interview script in Appendix One.

3 Discourses in the focus groups

The participants in the focus groups used several different discourses during the discussion of learning, education and voluntary youth programmes. The picture of education and learning painted in the groups suggests that formal education's only purpose is to establish a direct and almost automatic link to the individual's professional career. Outside of formal education, however, no institutional actors were identified, only the individual and the family. The discourses did not overtly mention civil society.

3.1 Discourses on what is learning

In the first part of the interviews we asked participants to describe what could be called *useful learning*. We also asked them what is needed for such learning to take place. In their discourses, learning was pictured *either* as an abstract process of development of the individual, *or* as the instrument for acquiring social status by establishing a professional career.

Learning related to an occupation *was constructed almost exclusively within the system of formal education*, without reference to other possible contexts. When prompted to talk about learning, participants mentioned general or personal experiences related to upper-secondary school and university, which reflects the dominance of formalized learning in their lives. The criticism formulated in both groups towards the formal educational system was that it is too theoretical at all levels, does not give choices to the individual, and does not guide the student towards developing as a person.

The discourse on *learning as the person's development* constructed *useful learning* to mean the development of ideas and thoughts, the personal-

ity and one's talents, as part of the general process of becoming "a better person". The benefit of learning is not necessarily the practical application of knowledge, but learning always develops the person.

One theme that came up spontaneously in both groups was the Panhellenic exams[10]. These exams were constructed as the "final judgement" on the future success or failure of the student in a desired profession. Going to private tuition centres in the run-up to the exams was described by endless hours of cramming, tiredness and running monotonous circles between "home, private tuition centre and school".

The issue seemed to be more at the focus in the male group, where the Panhellenic exams were mentioned spontaneously right at the start of the focus group, in an emotionally charged tone by Kostandinos.[11] It was also mentioned how social expectations put pressure on young people to go on to university, regarding vocational or other paths as wrong or as a failure.

Despite all this, both groups accept the role of the exams. They criticise the system because it is ineffective at preparing them for the final exams, and the content of the exams is often mentioned negatively (level of difficulty, irrelevant subjects).

Alexandros: Very simply useful learning is also what helps us as humans to develop some ideas, and in general to develop as a person, in our mentality and in the way we think... ...in other cases and in our times, because we live in a competitive environment, in a professional sense, and in general the question what occupational position you will have in the future, in general useful learning is what helps us to be consolidated in our field and to have some additional qualities, or to develop those qualities we have... That's it basically, learning can be divided into two areas, how much it helps us as persons and how much as professionals. I consider these two as useful learning.

Petros: We could say useful learning means to develop our ways of thinking, to become better as people, as humanity in general, I mean to develop one area inside learning, whether it be artistic or intellectual. To become better as humans.

Sakis: As someone mentioned it before, the correct learning that let's say makes us grow takes place in the Lyceum [upper-secondary school], and from then on, like at the university, I

10   This exam is taken at the end of the 3-year upper-secondary school and gives the chance of entry to university.
11   Later the same participant mentions that he's going to re-sit the Panhellenic exams this year, which may explain his personal dissatisfaction.

believe it's practical, I mean things we will use in a profession.

Giorgos: I'd agree with the others and I'd say that learning increases the educational level of every person, it's indispensable for everyone, Gymnasium, Lyceum and all the grades, and the Panhellenic exams, that were mentioned here by someone, of course they are a final examination for all, which determines the future of everybody, what they will do for an occupation, if they will succeed in it or not.

Kostandinos: Excuse me for changing the topic a bit but the only the fact that you are examined in subjects that have no relation to what you will study later on, for instance at medical school, excuse me but I don't believe that they will need so much mathematics, or physics.

In the female group a disagreement evolved around the difference of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for learning, with arguments for and against a system that puts the final diploma as a "promise" and as the only motivating factor. Critically, the transition from study to work is constructed as a linear sequence.

Valentina: It's also important I think to have the feeling that you learn exactly in order to learn and not like it is now, of course it's compulsory in this system to learn in order to sit for exams and all that...

Eva: And later on you study to take your degree, to find a job...

Christina: That's the motivation...

Maria: Yes... Wrong motivation.

Athina: It's the wrong motivation to take a degree?

Maria: It's the wrong motivation that they put you in a process that, you know, to take your degree you must sit and study...

Athina: E, otherwise how would you take your degree?

Eva: And all the grade-counting all these years...

Maria: I mean from the point of view that *do you want to work*? Good. You have to do this and this and this. Learning is not only about *have to*.

Athina: Yes but they need to give you some motivation...

Maria: I don't disagree...

Athina: That you will get a degree is one motivation, good enough for you to study!

Maria: Yes, I don't disagree, but if we look at it from today's conditions, to get a degree in general doesn't say much...

Evgenia: Yes, doesn't say much...

Athina: Okay, that's something else...

Maria: Which means that in general you must have a willingness to take the degree, not only to find a job, also because you like to study, you like the profession... the degree is not the only motivation and in general in our times a degree is not useful for too many things, so...

As for the conditions needed for someone to learn effectively, mostly *external* factors were brought up by participants. The main categories mentioned were "*teachers*" (trained, reliable, responsible, methodical, engaging, motivating, technologically literate), "*infrastructure & equipment*" (buildings, cleanliness, books, technical equipment), "*applying in practice what is taught in theory*", and "*the evaluation of teachers*".

The role of the individual (internal condition) was mentioned in relation to "*cleanliness*" (it starts from the individual), and *"family background"* (being motivated to learn from an early age). These lists are a good indication of what the group members see as missing from their learning environment and what needs to be improved in Greek education according to them. It is noticeable that the responsibility of the individual (internal conditions) for effective learning is mentioned only on two occasions

3.2   The discourse of powerlessness

When asked to name the actors who are responsible for resolving the problems of education and learning, both groups elicited the State, the individual, educational institutions, and the teachers as responsible actors. The first response in both groups was the State, followed by the individual citizen. Other spheres of influence were conspicuously absent (civil society, family, private educational institutions).

There was a noticeable strong expectation from both groups to put the state as the main responsible. For this very reason, it is surprising that in the male group citizens were pictured as the passive observers of the power games of political parties, and democracy was presented as only a "theory". The interaction between citizens and state, students and teachers was described as a power-relation without trust or "anything good", where the citizen is left powerless.

In contrast, in the female group Eva pointed out that the State constitutes of individuals who can affect their environment. Yet, the majority opinion reinforced that the State and

"*we*" are not the same. The mechanism of blaming extended to teachers as well, coming as an uncensored, spontaneous remark from a participant ("of course they are to blame").

> **Eva**: I would say that... well of course one is causing the other, it's a vicious circle... like.... the education. I mean when someone is educated either from home, or from the place where.... eeee, in the beginning he goes, let's say, to school and after to university, I mean he will have realised that some things have to be.... let's say to contribute to cleanliness [of his environment], that he must help as well in order to change things instead of waiting for things to change [by themselves]. Because if we look at it this way, the State was also one day in our position, I mean at our age, all these things form a circle, all this has to start from a young age so that when they reach the age to make decisions, this idea will have matured inside them.
>
> **Evgenia**: Yes but the most important problem in the education is not cleanliness.
>
> **Eva**: Nooo....yes. [some participants laugh]
>
> **Evgenia**: Individual responsibility... [to Moderator writing on the flipchart] All that goes to individual responsibility! Yes...
>
> **Moderator**: Something more?
>
> **Evgenia**: No, nothing, just that I wanted to answer her that the most important problem in the education is not cleanliness... to think that.... ...and the State was never our age, I mean the State is one thing, we are another.
>
> **Eva**: [interrupting the above] No, I didn't say that... Listen, I mean that someone who is governing today has already been through this position one day in his life, so if he doesn't have the education from the position he had in his twenties, he cannot change...
>
> **Despina**: You mean that Karamanlis would react differently, if... I dunno.... forget it! [many participants laugh]

When asked what responsibility they personally have in securing the conditions for effective learning, participants in the two groups visibly ran into contradictions and could not find a coherent approach for accommodating their views.

One discourse that again dominated was the recurring feeling that "things don't change" (powerlessness), which makes individual action useless or unnecessary. The attitude of "the majority" is described as ignorant, indifferent, egoistic, in the pursuit of individual interests (*volemenoi*[12]). The individual is indifferent to believe that something can be done, indifferent to fight for his or her own rights.

To counterweight the pessimistic mood, one participant in each group seemed to take the role of the optimist, declaring that something *must be* and *can be done,* coloured by a noticeably emotional delivery (changes in tone of voice) in both cases.

Kostandinos: As well as the loss of interest, I mean, shall I put it like... we are all too comfortable [volemenoi]... ...in order to struggle for the education, to put it this way.

Sakis: [starts at the same time with previous] ...we behave selfishly... Like the others have already said, we behave selfishly, we want ourselves to be comfortable [in our position] and we don't care what happens after. This is how we all function, at least the majority.

Giorgos: The majority are indifferent and all that because of the fact that whatever struggle they put in for education, they won't find an agreement, so nothing will come out of it.

Kostandinos: Exactly because there is this general philosophy.

Alexandros: And in general there is practical interest in education, I mean immediate solutions and not only, but many people are protesting... generally practical solutions are not offered, only general and let's say vague solutions are offered, practical and meaningful ones are not heard.

Yannis: Yes, that's it. We haven't learned to fight for our rights in education.

Moderator: Do you have something more to add?

Yannis: For me it's about the ignorance towards some, or maybe all the rights that we could have as individuals who, to put it this way [pauses], we can change something [intonation goes high, stress on "can" suggests optimism]. [Pauses, continues in a lower voice]. There is not the interest in learning about what we can do, what we've got the right to do.

In the female group, the debate evolving around the teacher's role sheds some light on

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12   *Volemenos, na eimaste volemenoi — an expression to mean "for us to be comfortable/suitable" with the connotation that at the same time we ignore what happens to others*

their concept of personal responsibility. Teachers are excused and blamed at the same time, in the same interaction. It is observed by Maria that the general loss of interest has the power to affect those who are parts of the system (here the teacher). This suggests that the circle is looped, because we cannot expect the individual to change without the system changing as well. At this point individual positive examples are brought up by Evgenia, but the general "negative" image of *volemenoi* professors stays on. It seems disliked, yet accepted that the individual is in pursuit of his/her own egoistic interest.

> **Evgenia**: I think it's important how much we as students and university students claim the things that belong to us and what we must do. I mean, obviously you need to have that willingness to learn, but from the moment that it is given that we have that willingness for learning and we want to learn, and we want better buildings, we want better books, we want better professors... the question is to claim all this, because all of this is not in our hands... I mean to make it right away on our own, I mean we cannot change the books, or the professors, we don't have that possibility... But we have the force to push things in order for these things to get better. I mean generally I think there is quietness and a sense that nothing happens.

> **Maria**: Indifference...

> **Evgenia**: And a certain indifference that says *will I change all that*? It's not in my hands. But indeed all this is in our hands, from the moment of course that we have the willingness to learn.

> **Eva**: Perhaps also the fear. Because let's say at a level... that you say something negative to the profess... negative in the sense that it's something crucial for the professor, you will have the fear that now he may stigmatize me even more and I will never pass the exam, because we have seen that phenomenon.

> **Maria**: That's why the professor has reached that point.

> **Evgenia**: Yes, and that will never happen, you won't make that as an individual on you own...

> **Christina**: Yes, okay, for sure...

> **Evgenia**: And we cannot be compared with the teachers, because they... [inaudible comment by another speaker] [starts spontaneously, fast-spoken]... Of course they are to blame, it's obvious...

> [laughter from many sides]

> **Christina**: But up to a certain point.

> **Evgenia**: They are to blame up to a point, yes. I mean...

> **Maria**: They are also content with the general conditions in education.

> **Evgenia**: Yes.

> **Maria**: Perhaps because there is no evaluation... but at the same time... [inaudible, many people talk at the same time] It depends on the person. Just

as there are professors like you say…

Christina: [at the same time with the above] Yes, I mean there are good professors…

Valentina: Exactly, yes…

Evgenia: …who would search and come to you and write down for you and do things and gives you comments, will look things up for you… Professors like this…

Maria: Still there are many teachers who had the appetite for the job when they were young, and now they burned out…

Evgenia: No, age doesn't play a role here.

Maria: You never know…

Evgenia: It only depends on the person. For instance, I take my salary, nobody is controlling what I do…

Valentina: I am comfortably positioned [*volemenos*]…

Evgenia: …do whatever I want…

3.3   Gender-based learning fields in society

The different gender roles and expectations at play in Greek society are discernable in the interactions within the groups. In general, *family* was mentioned by both groups as a basic factor influencing the learning of every individual. The female group mentioned family more frequently and in a wider variety of contexts (which could have been caused by the fact that this group had a 25-year old mother of 2 children inside). While in the female group family was always mentioned as positive influence, either protective or playing an important role, instances of negative influence on learning and wrong decisions by parents were only elicited in the male group. Getting married and parenting were only mentioned in the female group. While males were constructing the family as motivator for learning and a source of person's development, females mentioned a wider list of functions, such as economic support, protective guidance, companionship.

3.4   Learning fields and grouping strategies

Participants were asked to think of fields or areas outside of formal education where they can learn and to group them into categories. Not surprisingly perhaps, the category created first in the female group was labelled "social life/environment", including family,

friends, municipal cultural centres, travels (with family), the professional field and private tuition centres. In the male group, the first category created included the mass media, the Internet, and different forms of arts, and was labelled "something for myself/non-obligatory", indicating a different perspective on learning.

The male group elicited more global and systemic learning fields, while the female group's list was more diverse and personal. The items mentioned *only* by the male group were Internet, "groups of people discussing things", volunteer groups, organisations. Only elicited by the female group were the buzukia (fancy clubs with live music), documentaries, theatre, private tuition centres, library, municipal cultural centres, professional field, religion and travels.

Noticeably, the male group mentioned *Internet* several times, while the female group talked about mass media without explicitly mentioning the Internet. The two learning fields in civil society mentioned by the participants were *municipal cultural centres* (female group) and *volunteer groups and organisations* (male group). Both of these were associated with arts, either in the form of lessons organised by the municipality centre (female group), or self-expression through artistic activities in volunteer groups (male group).

Female participants at first grouped the fields into *social life* and *the rest*. Private tuition centres, religion and travel, however, did not fit well into the above two categories. One solution offered was to make a group for *actions based on individual choice* (travelling, religion, arts, sports and friends) and *obligatory activities*. Another emerging category was *pleasurable, not process-based learning fields*, to accommodate theatre and travel.

The odd-ones out, ending up being a group on their own, were *private tuition centres* and *religion*. The first, the *frontistirio* prompted a spontaneous discussion. The kind of learning that takes place there was constructed as "not useful knowledge", "the repetition of what you already learned in school", "not useful", "specific, particular", "pure exam preparation", "instrumental", and "not benefiting the development of a person". In the case of religion the group did not seem too interested, finally it was relegated to the domain of family, using the argument that "generally the individual will follow the tradition of the family".

3.5   Who decides where to learn?

As above, the male and the female group seemed to place the emphasis on different things at this stage of the focus. The emerging discussion in the male group focused on the individual's freedom to choose against social/familial pressure. In the female group, different factors that influence the access to specific learning fields were thematized, such as economic means of the family, age of child, guardianship against the negative effect of television, religious influence from the parents. Although it was mentioned, the role of individual choice did not represent the dominant discourse in the groups.

Participants seem to accept, though not necessarily support, the fact that the family takes a substantial role in these decisions.

Alexandros: I'd say about the arts, the [volunteer] groups in general and the mass media that it's purely personal choice of each of us, of course everyone is influenced by some things while growing up and the parents can give guidance, but from then on it's only the personal choice of each and everyone to choose what he can make use of for learning, what can help him develop and what cannot. So it's pure personal choice what I will choose, if I participate or not.

Yannis: I'd say that it's not purely personal choice, because everyone receives an amount of pressure to become accepted by the group, and maybe he listens to music that he doesn't like, like someone here said before, but he keeps listening to it to be accepted.

Moderator: Can you elaborate a bit more on the nature of this pressure?

Yannis: To become accepted, I mean to be able to be friends with people who will only take him if he listens to the music they listen to, watch the films that they watch, now I'm mainly referring to the different arts.

Petros: …And also the parents are pushing the kid to go to an association or group and to learn something, for example to learn some musical instrument, to develop painting skills, maybe even, I dunno, to learn a foreign language, and then the kid perhaps doesn't want to do it, because he's at an age when he doesn't think about these things, so the parents push him in this direction, because they believe it's the right thing.

Yannis: And automatically, if he had a gift for something else, he won't ever develop it if he follows instead those three you mentioned.

3.6 Volunteerism discourse

The discourse on volunteerism made it clear that it is constructed on two levels: (1) on the abstract, as an act of higher ethical value, which entails pure personal development, and (2) on the practical level, as voluntary participation in certain programmes, regarded in a pragmatic light (dependent of costs, time and personal benefits).

The abstract meaning of volunteerism was associated with the "difficult but eventually pleasant" experience of helping those perceived as "in real need". In this sense volunteerism was constructed as "service", "offering without expecting remuneration", "out of personal choice, without relation to certificates", "personal growth", "travelling", "doing for society's benefit", "learning to function in a team", "only moral satisfaction", "without age limit", "admirable" and "important", and "without partying".

A strong emotional reaction to volunteerism was provoked from both groups by one of the audiovisual prompts we used. In a short clip we showed wheelchaired people with their assistants. In both groups the first reactions were a direct association to the "pure" form of volunteerism, described as *difficult, psychologically demanding, but rewarding*. It prompted participants to tell personal stories or explain their fears related to helping the disabled.

Another effect of the same video was to change a participant's previous position. Giorgos previously said to the group that even though he has the willingness to participate in such activities, he has no free time. Here, however, he declared that he would like to participate. The new condition (excuse?) he set was that "there [has to be] the right level of organisation, because they are a difficult group, disabled people, and they need some specialisation".

Context:

Participants have just finished watching the third video excerpt.

The first excerpt they watched is from the BBC's documentary on the European Voluntary Service, the second is from a youth exchange organised in Greece.

This excerpt is about a specialised camp for people with mobility problems. The video shows the activities of the camp, wheel-chaired people spending their holiday in a hotel, swimming in

the pool, assisted by trained assistants.

Moderator: First impressions?

Anastasia: Volunteerism.

Despina: This is volunteerism in all its meanings.

Anastasia: Without hubbub...

Evgenia: and without partying... [laughter]

Anastasia: The image speaks for itself.

Maria: The sense of service touches you.

Evgenia: Completely humanistic.

Many participants together: Yes, exactly.

Moderator: The message you get from the images?

Maria: I feel that there are people who need help and that
we, not have to, we must feel the need to volunteer for them.
I feel, the way I feel, I feel that I'm doing bad when I'm not
volunteering, not simply I'm not doing good, but that it's bad
that I don't volunteer, they need, to a certain degree I feel
that I should already have done it.

So what kind of learning takes place during volunteering? Participants perceive the learning within the logic of the discourse. On the one hand, the experience in itself makes people become better, giving them a new perspective to life and moral satisfaction, teaching them respect and solidarity. On the other, there are specific, job-related skills, deriving from the theme of the voluntary activity. The important element, however, seems to be the construction of volunteering as a moral obligation, something everyone "must do at least once in a lifetime". Moral satisfaction and a sense of duty is valued much higher than the activity itself.

As a next step, we asked participants how could more young people like themselves be involved in these programmes. In both groups the feeling of immediate action was in the atmosphere. The arguments elicited made participation dependent on: duties at university ("I have a lot to lose there"); finding a job and getting married ("things become *difficult then*, so *now* is the best time"); language skills ("I need someone to help me with the language"); "when it's the right moment"; promotion in schools ("it should start there"). The male group also gave a more homogenous excuse for not participating: lack of free time.

Alexandros: I would personally participate in a volunteer
group, if I had some free time of course.

Kostandinos: Yes, that's it exactly.

Alexandros: Yes, it's a problem in our times and from my personal interest I'd participate in a volunteer group that has to do with the environment, these are the most important in these times, the ones to do with the environment and its protection. [Pauses.] Because unfortunately from the state and in general the different states do not have an interest in it, because there is no money interest, financially.

Moderator: Others?

Kostandinos: The same for me too. Free time. Guys, it's only a matter of time.

Moderator: When would you participate?

Kostandinos: Well, when I had free time, because specifically in this period of life where we live now, I don't have time, I have little free time that, okay, I'm sorry, but I want to take advantage of it for myself. I believe it's understandable. But in another situation when I had more free time I would surely join.

Petros: Yes, but the way the rhythm of life is, you will never find free time, then you will find something else to do...

Kostandinos: Don't tell me, the last two years I spend in Drama [city], because now I am again sitting for the Panhellenic exams, that's why...

Petros: Ah, all right, yes . . .

Kostandinos: But the two years I was signed up in Greenpeace and I helped a bit at the... [hesitates] ...what's it called... in the street with the flyers.

Alexandros: And sadly, especially in schools, where volunteerism could be promoted, it's there that the most part of it is neglected and not given any significance, neither from the schools nor from anyone else. In specific with those age groups who could help voluntarily, no importance is given at all.

Moderator: If you wanted, when would you want to?

Yannis: I think immediately, given that the things have reached a point, that if we are not going to help voluntarily, nothing is going to change. I mean what is there to wait for, for things to get even worse?

Voluntary as alternative and critical

Another contradictory aspect of the volunteerism discourse observable in the focus groups is the idea that volunteerism is something *alternative*. In the female group Evgenia, the only participant with some experience with CSOs, challenges the rest of the group by saying that volunteerism is not a once-in-a-lifetime activity. She presents it as more holistic and independent of time constraints ("you can volunteer for 2 hours every Saturday"). Convinced, another participant adds that it's not "something that ordinary people do". It is something for those who have "*that click*".

Similarly, in the male group, Petros arrives to the conclusion, following the input from the videos, that in a broader understanding volunteerism is simply voluntary *participation* in *something*. Others go on to explain him that this is the same moral satisfaction, because you offer to society anyhow, thereby offering an *alternative* to global capitalism and commercialisation.

Petros: [wondering, half-asking] Basically by volunteer groups we don't mean in a strict sense that you have to offer something for the community or to someone else... Voluntary group means simply to want to participate in a team which is doing something...

Kostandinos: [interrupting] ...basically...

Petros: eh, and this will promote participation.

Yannis: Whatever you do, even if you play music in the street, you offer something....

Petros: Surely...

Yannis: ...you give yourself the moral satisfaction . . .

Petros: Yes...

Yannis: Because simply, you don't want to follow let's say the capitalistic nature [of things], all that commercial....

3.7   Conditions for participation in civil society

Finally, we asked both groups how they would promote participation in programmes for volunteering or youth mobility projects. The general picture suggests that CSOs who want to increase participation have to become experts in communication on at least two fronts.

One, in offering personal, first-hand experiences in a non-commercial way about the programmes available. Using word of mouth promotion and spreading information through informal networks was suggested by both groups. Internet was not regarded particularly suitable for attracting youth on account that it is not "credible" and "impersonal", while television is regarded "too commercial" and confusing. Participants are accustomed to and expect individual attention and face-to-face contact.

Secondly, participants expect an adequately organised effort, including presentations and information to be spread in schools (secondary and tertiary level). Thirdly, participants of the focus described the process of selecting a programme from a "customer's" point of view. Their decision to participate will likely be based on criteria similar to choosing any other service in the third sector, thus making participation depend on personal hobbies, interests and time schedule.

Making the decision of participating (or not) was pictured as a rather complex and tiresome process by one of the participants, perhaps indicating a pattern that can explain why participation is relatively low in youth CSOs, and showing an example of the daily mechanisms of low trust in organisations:

Context:

Participants have just finished watching a video excerpt. The excerpt is from a promotional clip of an EU-funded youth exchange organised in Greece by a youth NGO based in Thessaloniki.

Kostandinos: If we research into it a little bit more, because from one advertisement you cannot judge everything. And from then on we just put our impressions.

Yannis: The first impression was positive.

Sakis: Surely.

Moderator [to Kostandinos]: What would you look into

about this one?

Kostandinos: What would I look into? First of all if I knew…, because I imagine it was advertising some educational institution that had these things inside, I'd look it up and go there, trying to find some people there who are registered there, in order to hear their impressions from inside, I'd visit their website on the Internet to have a more general idea about the lessons that are organised in each category, for example if I choose the category of street theatre that was mentioned [in the video], I'd observe the lessons they do there... ehm, also the finances, the finances play a big role.

[Pauses for 5 seconds]

I'd go and have a look at the same installations, speak to some people, with someone in charge there, where they show me. These are for me the steps of looking into it in order to decide whether they are correct or not.

4   Conclusions

In conclusion, the following can be said about the two focus group interviews:

The hypothesis that young people's participation is low because CSOs are not regarded as a domain that can enable learning seems to be supported by the groups. While practical learning was constructed by participants in formalized domains, voluntary participation was seen mostly as an abstract and/or alternative act, in private and/or familial contexts, disconnected from civil society actors. In their eyes, the kind of learning that may give them an occupation takes place in formal institutions. Learning, in the sense of as a person's development, is never mentioned to entail practical advantages or benefits for the future.

On the whole, in their narratives, learning *as personal development* **and** *learning for their professional career* **are not effectively synthesized and connected neither by formal education, nor by civil society. They are dissatisfied with formal education, and mostly unaware of civil society's (or non-formal learning's) potential.**

It can be concluded that CSOs in the region of Thessaloniki are at present too weak to create a visible and credible connection between formal and non-formal learning, and the practical benefits of voluntary participation.

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H2S re search

Appendix One

Participants' Profile

At the time of the interviews, all participants were permanent residents in Thessaloniki. In the male group, the ages ranged from 18 to 22, five out of six group members were enrolled at university in science programmes, all coming from the eastern side of Thessaloniki. The sixth participant came from the western side of the city and was enrolled into a post-secondary vocational education programme. One participant had experience with seasonal work.

The female group was aged 20 to 25, with the oldest participant already married with two children. Apart from her, all were enrolled at university, 5 in sciences programmes, 2 in the humanities. Two lived in the centre and the rest on the eastern side of Thessaloniki. Three of them had experience with temporary or seasonal jobs.

Focus Group Interview Script

Introduction

- Self-introduction of the moderators
  Research background and themes ("ways to learn")
  Permission for audiovisual recording
  "Rules of the game"
  Participants' short self-introduction (name, studies, hobbies)

Warm-up

Education, learning
What are the main problems related to education and learning in Greece today?

Focus

Learning, roles and responsibilities

* What would you call "useful learning"?
  What conditions (internal & external) are needed in order to effectively learn something? How can these be grouped?

* Who's responsible for coming up with solutions to problems related to learning and education? [Actors written on flipchart]

* What is the relationship between these actors?

* What is the role of personal responsibility in taking care of the conditions for effective learning?

Learning fields

* What learning fields exist outside of formal school system? [Write on flipchart!]
  How could these be grouped together? [Categories from flipchart given on small cards]

* What other categories can you imagine?

* What are the benefits, disadvantages of each field?

* Who decides where you learn something? What's your role in this decision?

* What knowledge is not possible to be gained through these channels?

Perception of out-of-school learning programmes

* What comes to your mind if you hear youth exchange abroad? [First

  association!]
  What have you heard about them?
  For whom are they? Are they interesting? Why yes, why no?

* What comes to your mind if you hear social voluntary work?
  What have you heard about this kind of work?
  For whom is it? Is it interesting? Why yes, why no?

* From the learning fields, where would you place these activities?
  What can you learn in these programmes?

Communication

We will screen some media materials and short clips made during youth programmes, one by one. After each:

* first impression

* the message that came across

* for whom is this video

* the atmosphere? would you try something like this yourself?

Participation, decision-making

How could more young people be made to participate in these programmes?
When would you participate?

Videos screened & duration:

(1) 45 second excerpt from the BBC documentary on European Voluntary Service (YOUTH Programme, 2000-2006)

(2) 40 second excerpt from a 2-minute promotional video clip of a youth exchange titled "Creativity 2", organised by Kids in Action in 2005 (YOUTH Programme, 2000-2006)

(3) 35 second excerpt about a specialised camp for people with mobility problems (the video shows wheelchaired people assisted by trained assistants)

(4) 40 second excerpt from the promotional video of the Youth in Action (2007-2013) programme of the European Union

(5) 30 second excerpt from a YMCA camp in the Balkans

Appendix Two

Results from the "Here2Stay" Pilot Questionnaires

In the pilot phase we have administered 300 questionnaires to university students (aged 18-26) in Thessaloniki using random sampling and face-to-face interviewing. The resulting sample was weighted for the total Greek population aged 18-26. The sample contains a distortion towards female respondents, who are over-represented by an approximate 2:1 ratio.

The results we present below describe the degree of involvement in non-formal learning activities, the perception of the benefits of these activities, and the semantic associations to the phrase *non-formal learning*.

What associations does non-formal learning have?

The semantic analysis was based on the question: *How could you describe what is non-formal learning*? As the term is in itself a negative expression, (non-formal vs formal), most respondents defined it *against* different aspects of *other kinds of learning*. Thus, the most frequently used categories were *out-of-school, non-traditional*, or *non-certified*.

Many respondents mentioned elements of formal education that do not exist, in their perception, in non-formal, such as: *books*, *teachers*, *programme*, *exams* or *cramming*.

When asked to describe what it is like, the most frequent adjectives were *alternative, practical, meaningful* and *learning through experience*. As the focus groups have also shown, the perception of formal education is that it is too theoretical, thus perhaps the high occurrence of the labels related to practice and experience in the construction of *non-formal*. The interactive and team-working character was also frequently mentioned.

Specific examples of non-formal learning given were: *seminars, congresses, experiential procedures such as drama, experiential learning, staying in another country, interaction with other people, learning from work, cultural exchange, in school but with a different way of educational process, workshops, group games, gathering of young people from different countries and cooperation between young people in a specific topic,* and *e-learning*.

Participation in Civil Society

This part of the questionnaire aimed to discover how active young people are in civil society. We constructed four dimensions to find out the answer, taking the CIVICUS definition of civil society as a basis:

> Civil society is the space between the family, state and the market, where people come together to pursue their interests… [This definition] aims to go beyond the usual focus on formal and institutionalised CSOs, and to take account of informal coalitions and groups. (Sotiropoulos & Karamagioli, 2005:15)

We created two indices to measure the activity of young people in the domain of collective, organised civic participation. Four types of involvement were identified, by two dimensions: participation in volunteering programmes by CSOs and personal development through participation in organised activities.

The items were: (1) participation long-term (more than two months) and (2) short-term volunteering programmes (youth exchanges, work camps), (3) active membership in an organisation (participation at least once a month), and (4) participation in extra-curricular activities (at least twice a month).[13]

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13   *Extra-curricular activities and organisational membership were deemed equally important.*

The results are indicated in **Table 1** below. What we can see that half of the target population is fairly active, even if the other half are not normally engaged with civil society. Nearly one-fifth of the respondents is regularly active in more than one type of programme or context (categories 4 and 5).[14]

Table 1: Participation Index by 5 Categories

Category	Interpretation	Estimated Percent in population
1.00 = Inactives	Respondents in this group **do not report being engaged with any activity** organised within the domain of civil society and they do not participate in extra-curricular activities either.	50.9%
2.00 = Socially actives	Respondents in this group declare to be members of special interest or other extra-curricular groups. They belong to **the invisible domain** of civil society: they do not report to be active members in an organisation.	17.4%
3.00 = Regular members	This group is made up of young people who are either **in regular contact** with a civil society organisation (7.4%), or have already participated in short-term voluntary programmes by an NGO (7.3%)	14.7%
4.00 = Active CS members	Respondents have participated in a combination of at least 1-2 different programmes and/or are active in extra-curricular groups and/or in NGOs.	11.6%
5.00 = Very Active CS members	Respondents in this group are **active in all types** of programmes of NGOs and also join extra-curricular groups.	5.4%

Perception of different activities with a non-formal learning potential

The questionnaire had a section where respondents had to decide how much three specific activities could, theoretically, contribute to (1) someone's personal development, and (2) someone's chances of finding a job (employability).

The activities for personal development were: (a) staying in a foreign country hosted by a

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14   *The questionnaire item scores were first weighted according to frequencies, then totalled and divided into 5 categories.*

foreign family as a part of a student exchange programme; (b) participation in a youth group who wants to organise cultural activities in the neighbourhood for children and youth; (c) participation in a youth/student group that lobbies at the local government for a bike road to be built.

The activities for employability were: (a) learning a foreign language by staying in a foreign country; (b) participation in an international work camp for restoring a traditional village; (c) participation in a theatre group that also stages shows and plays.

The results in **Table 2** indicate that around three-fourths of the respondents perceive one or more of these activities positively. The results of the aggregated perception index are presented in Table 2 below.[15] We can see that more than half of the respondents rated 4 or 5 of these activities positively, which indicates that they understand the personal and professional benefits that they bring. One-fifth was more sceptic about the relationship between employment and the activities enlisted in the questionnaire, and 6% didn't see any positive impact in any of the activities described in the items.

Table 2: Programme Perception Index

15   *Studying a foreign language abroad (Item 1, employability block) was taken out of the aggregated index, because component analysis showed that it does not correlate positively with more than one of the other items. This means that studying a foreign language abroad is perceived by the respondents to be different from the rest of the non-formal learning activities in the index.*

Based on 3 personal development items and 2 employability items

Category	Interpretation	Percent among valid answers (N=180)
1.00 = Low Trust	Respondents in this group believe that none or only one of the programmes helps the person's employability or personal development.	5.8%
2.00 = Selective Trust	Respondents in this group see only 2 of the programmes as useful for their development or future career OR they only see the personal development use of the programmes (items 1-3)	20.8%
3.00 = Hesitants	This group says that some of the items from both group can be useful. They answer positively to 3 items.	15%
4.00 = Positives	This group rated 4 items positively, thus expressing clearly positive and trustful attitudes towards the benefit of the programmes in the items.	22.2%
5.00 = Optimists	This group answers positively to all items, meaning that they see benefits in all of the programmes related to personal development and their future career.	36.1%

your life stories

Real people sharing real life stories! What's better to reveal the essence of things! Admittedly, there are thousands of young people out there that have something to share. We reached some of them. It's up to you to find more, ask them and be inspired.

There is so much useful experience collected that sharing doesn't only work as a medium to enhance memory, it works as a motive for people to participate as well, and it also makes society recognize the value of participation.
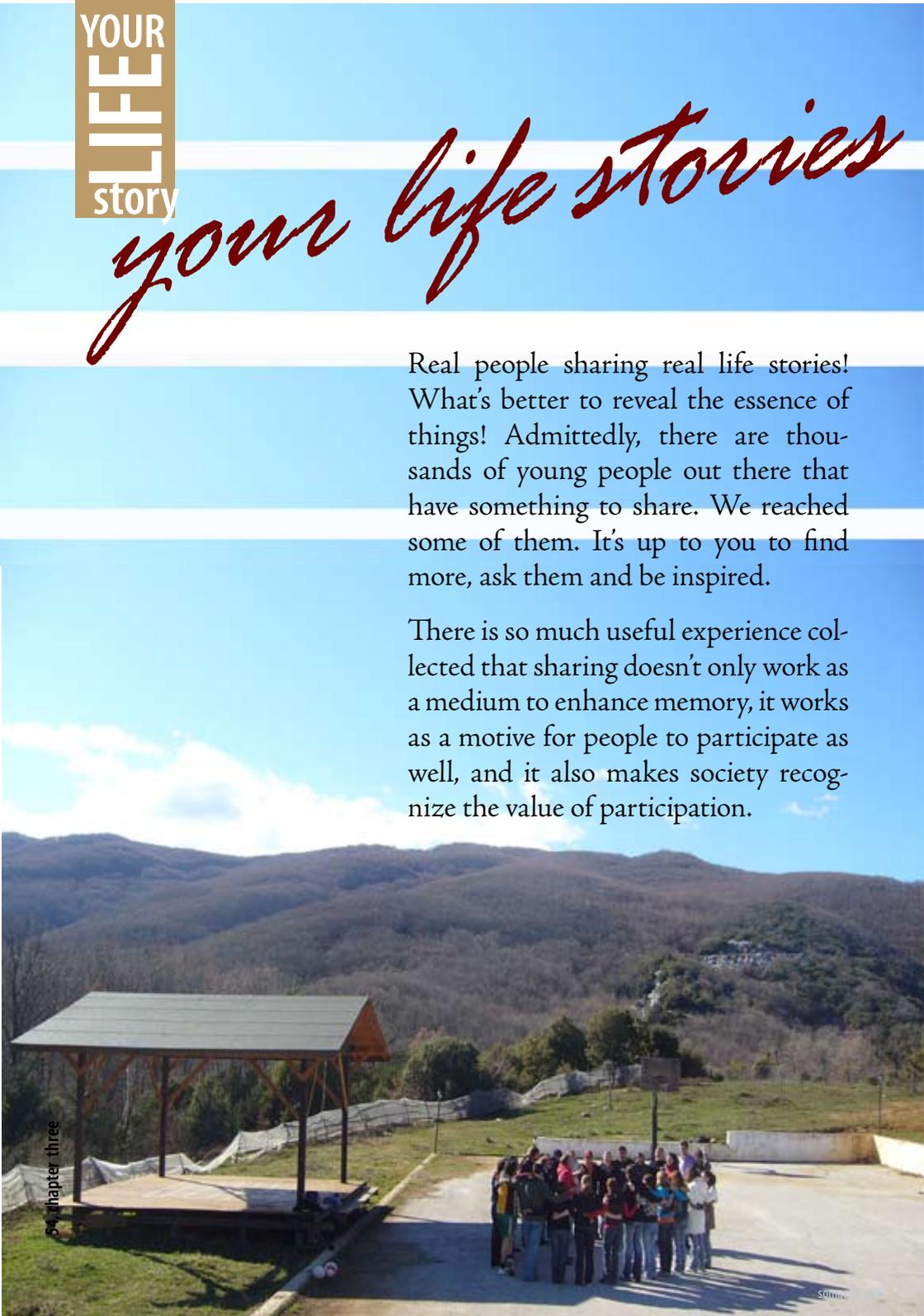
funny, creative, intriguing, alien, surprising

aristos

"A training course is like a mixer. Participants are different fruits and ingredients. Some are sweet and some are spicy but soon after, you can enjoy a very tasteful milkshake and you can have a round of drinks with the society!"

olga

"My non-formal activity has been like a tree… just a small seed at the beginning with the wish to grow up and to become a big green tree. From time to time, some people with very strange names and uniforms poured water to the seed, till it became finally a big tree.

Through the years that passed it gave birth to some fruits and some of them went down to earth and they became also trees. But the big tree has to grow higher, it needs more water, otherwise it will not let the smallest trees grow up. It will hinder the sun from them…"

creative, challenging, friendly, full of surprises, colorful

maris

"The European Voluntary Service was like a small road up in the mountain, you never know what is waiting for you after the next turn."

How would you describe the non-formal learning activity you took part in?

awakening, playful, imaginative, energizing, extremely crazy

iliana

"My experience was like reading a great book. You are being excited all the time and never stop reading. When it comes to the end you feel sad but relieved. After that you keep talking about it all the time and to all your friends!"

maria

"My EVS was like a real challenge. Full of emotions, experiences, an everyday dialogue with myself…"

challenging, tough, full, emotional, dreamful

christina
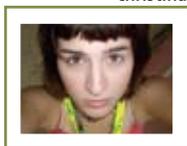
noisy, fun colorful complex new

"I took part in a 10-day youth exchange in Poland. In the beginning it was like a room that is untidy and messy. You find it hard to clean it because you don't know where to start. Once you do find it, you can clean the mess but still have a room full of things that react with each other and create a nice place to live in."

aristos

"The educational programmes I used to plan were not so participative. When I heard about a training course on "human rights education with young people", addressed to trainers and facilitators of learning programmes, organized by Kids in Action, I applied. It was there that I realized what non-formal education in action is and its importance for young people's development."

Aristos has studied adult education.

"In Romania I followed a training course about "peace education". During a workshop about our past, everyone shared intimate concerns, problems and fears. I also did. I've seen the extent of problems people face. Most of them were from Balkan countries. It was this "shock" that motivated me to work for and with young people from the Balkans."

Do you remember yourself before the "non-formal learning activity"?

maria

"Before the European Voluntary Service (EVS) I had really strange feelings. I knew I wanted to do something creative, I wanted to travel and live abroad, change my life. The moment I heard about it, I got really excited as it was not only a great chance to travel abroad and live there but also to work in the youth sector in a very interesting project. My family was not really in favor but I had taken my decision and no one could change my mind."

When I went to my EVS I couldn't speak Spanish at all while there was not even one person who could speak English. Not even the other volunteer that we shared the flat. The first month I worked really hard. I had the feeling I cannot express myself and communicate with the others. It was a month full of pressure, emotions and loneliness. Soon I learned a lot and now without any classes of Spanish I speak fluently and I use this language in my every day life and my work a lot.

christina

One experience that you'll remember all your life?

"There was just an instinct to learn new things without being under the supervision of someone. My interest for traveling led me to my first participation. The combination of it with learning through experience was very intriguing.

My close social environment was a bit skeptic in their reaction to what I was doing. The connection of the activity with the European Union was a strong element that helped them, as well as me, to recognize it as a valuable form of education."

"The subject of the youth exchange in Poland was "Peace & Love". There were different workshops working separately every day. The objective was to work all together the last day. There was a festival taking place in the city's central square. That day all as one, we presented a short theatrical play. The result was highly rewarding; I'll never forget this moment."

iliana

"Myself before? Tired because of the difficulties I faced the previous year and ready, though anxious, for the most creative experience! Simple questions that were crossing my mind were: how will people there be? Will they like me? Will it be funny enough or boring? Will my English be at a good level? Of course after the first day in the youth camp all my questions were answered and everything was even better than I had ever imagined!"

"What this experience (Italy, 10 days work camp in human rights education) offered to me is the awareness that when you really open your heart to the others, only true and strong emotions can be revealed!!"

maris

"My first *juicy bite* of non formal learning made me change my mind about learning and I decided to go for a long term European Voluntary Service.

I decided to do that, firstly in order to broaden my mind and challenge myself in every way."

Do you remember yourself before the "non-formal learning activity"?

One experience that you'll remember all your life?

"There is one moment I remember like it was yesterday even though it was back in 2004. I was on my way to my EVS project. In the airport, I felt quite strange while I didn't know what to expect for the next 6 months. Suddenly, I saw one familiar face and his friend among strangers. After some time we became friends and colleagues. This was a special moment for me once with the support of these people I was able to form my EVS in the shape I wanted. Till now, I have two really good friends, partners to work with and people I learn from and with!"

olga

"I have been a member of the Greek Scouts since my childhood. Learning about the environment, team work, first aid and communication methods through games that didn't include a lecture was an incredible experience, especially for me as a kid.

The decision to take part in Scouting activities was my parents' choice, but it was mine to continue and later to become a trainer for younger scouts."

"The most special moment during my experience was my participation in a European meeting of scouts at the age of 16. With 39 scouts from Greece, we traveled to Belgium and spent almost a month full of environmental, sport and art activities. It was my first time traveling abroad and meeting people from different cultures.

I will never forget it, because it was there that I started to see people with an open mind, thinking always that every single one of us is different but totally equal."

How have non-formal learning experiences positively influenced you?

personal development

I became a better person. I now act more empathetically. I softened stereotypes and prejudices for people who don't have the same attitude or cultural identity as mine. I realized that the most important thing in life is peace and the efforts for ensuring it for everyone.

social development

I don't have brothers or sisters, but now I can say that I made many good friends, supporting each other and acting as a big family. "Kids in Action" organization and its activities was a rebirth for me! I found a new world!

employability

One (disputably) negative thing is that non-formal education is not so much recognized; by the society and the state. But after my participation in some activities, I have developed skills necessary to any job nowadays such as leadership, creativity, spirit of initiative, appreciation for team work and more. Language skills have also been enhanced.

Aristodimos Parashou is from Thessaloniki. He has recently set up the NGO *United Societies of Balkans*

How have non-formal learning experiences positively influenced you?

personal development

I gained from the activity the ability to lead a group. Being able to organize people into doing something together and addressing to a large audience were abilities I developed through my participation. As well, working in a group, with team spirit, common aims and commitment. Having such experiences makes it easier to communicate and collaborate with other people in my everyday life...

social development

I never thought of myself as a sociable person. Taking part in this activity made me see that maybe this is not true. Once I found myself in a foreign environment full of people that I met for the first time, I managed to communicate, make friends and develop the self confidence needed.

employability

I am a student of architecture and I believe that my non-formal learning experience was quite useful regarding my development as an architect. The abilities to organize a team and work in a group are basic things that you need in order to manage in the work field.

Recently I applied for my participation in the Erasmus project and from my discussion with the responsible professor I understood that such experiences referred in the CV are favorable to my acceptance.

Christina Tzekou is from Thessaloniki. After her experience, she has been very active with *Kids in Action* and in *Here2Stay*.

personal development

This project helped me to be stronger with myself as I made it for first time to travel all alone. Secondly, it was a great challenge for me to see if I am able to be a creative member in a group which is composed of completely different personalities.

social development

Different languages, different cultures, completely different habits... But besides all the difficulties, we were able to find the golden line in order to pass our time as perfectly as we could. Under these circumstances my social skills reached their top level and I am really proud of that cause coming back to my country some things are less difficult to be solved due to that!!!

employability

As far as employability is concerned a trip to another place not just for amusement but for work at the same time is a serious advantage!

Iliana Dimoni is from Thessaloniki. She studies theater.

personal development

My EVS was a tough experience. I had no friends and it was very difficult to integrate in the society. I was always a person full of people and attention and suddenly I had to face the loneliness. I had to spend a lot of time with myself and to face my feelings to the maximum. This helped me to learn more about myself, to think a lot, to spend time on the important details of life, to find out what I want to do in the near future and to learn how to handle different cases in my life.

social development

For the first time in life I worked with real situations of excluded youth. Being grown up in a friendly environment without any problem I had no clue of the problems young people like me face every day. I was living in a pink cloud and this changed during my EVS. I realized how it is to live in poverty, in families with internal problems, in an area where drugs and alcohol are habits of the majority of young people and how it is to be a minority of a place.

employability

The EVS helped me a lot in my professional life later on. Of course, it is always an asset to speak languages, to show you have intercultural experience but in my case it had a greater value as later on I continued working in the youth sector as a youth trainer and EVS coordinator in a NGO. At the moment I am trainer in EVS trainings something I could not do easily without my EVS experience and I support several volunteers who are doing or want to do the EVS programme.

Maria Nomikou is from Athens. She is member of the YFJ pool of trainers, works in close cooperation with the Greek National Agency and has worked for an international NGO

personal development

I am now more tolerant, open-minded, and friendly. I have cleared out my priorities in life - got to know myself better. I have got the non-stop interest for different cultures and travelling as well!

social development

I can handle new/crucial/difficult situations easier than before. My tolerance and understanding has certainly developed. I have learned to communicate with different people. All the other social skills that I have gained from my experience I can use in my everyday life and in my work! EVS is surely connected to real life; it's not something far, unreachable and impractical! On the contrary, all what someone gains, helps you daily to be a better person, a useful member for the society and the people around you!

employability

I am now working in the field of non-formal education and more specifically in the Tallinn Youth Work center, Estonia. My EVS experience has been crucial to this development in my life; all the competences that I acquired are crucial and I apply them in my everyday working life: initiative spirit, communication abilities, leadership, commitment, creativity and innovation, to name but a few.

Maris Pajula is from Estonia and did EVS in Thessaloniki. She works for a major youth service provider in Tallinn.

personal development

I have learned practical things that even now I am using in my ordinary life, such as: orientation, communication methods, team work and trust, first aid and most notably, the awareness that I possess these abilities.

I am self-confident and committed to work with people. I am more open minded and respectful to diversity. I am embracing mistakes and my life is driven by the will for continuous development.

social development

Since my first contact with the Scouts, I was able to exist constructively with people coming from different backgrounds or other countries. I made friends for life and I became more sociable. Parallel to that, I have understood why it is so necessary people to be actively involved in their societies. Making a change is possible, only through commitment.

employability

Since I was a trainer for younger scouts I am able to deal with teams and to assign a task or a job to someone.

Through scouts I had my first contact with multimedia, something that through the years I improved.

Competences, needed in the job market nowadays, such as creativity and problem solving, communication in groups/inter-cultural context and more, have been shaped and developed through my participation in the Scouts.

Olga Kiriakidou is from Thessaloniki. She works in children's summer camps and also in *Kids in Action.*

Up to this point we have made only occasional reference to that bewildering assortment of non-formal educational and training activities that constitute - or should constitute - an important complement to formal education in any nation's total education effort. These activities go by different names - 'adult education', 'continuing education', 'on-the-job training', 'accelerated training', ' farmer or worker training', and 'extension services.' They touch the lives of many people and, when well aimed, have a high potential for contributing quickly and substantially to individual and national development. They can also contribute much to cultural enrichment and to individual self-realization.

Philip H. Coombs, The world educational crisis - A systems analysis, 1968

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We went out on a limp and like Benjamin Franklin did with lightning we did with something safer but equally enlightening! Experimenting with something that aims at making learning more explicit, understandable and recognizable in all directions, less tacit and more tangible in non-formal learning activities, was undoubtedly a challenge and still remains one. Youthpass, for the sake of brevity can be described as a certificate. It is certainly much more than that especially when it comes to – an integral part - the self assessment process that is attached to the framework of the 8 Key Competences for lifelong learning. We turned the training room into a laboratory. . .and outside it was raining!

Integrating Youthpass and Key Competences in a training course
a good practice

The following process was "tested" during a training course on outdoor education titled OUT!, which took place in October 2007 in Greece and was organized by 'Ydrogeios' (www.ydrogeios.org). The educational content was delivered by "Kids in Action" (www.kidsinaction.gr) and some members of the task force of "Here2Stay".

As we mentioned in Chapter 1, the training course served the ground for the pilot run of a "Youthpass specialist". Below we describe the "good practice" that emerged out of a practitioners' dialogue among us. We kept our minds focused on providing all participants with meaningful learning opportunities and the necessary aid to grasp it and take it home.

We know well that not all training courses taking place under the conditions of the "Youth in Action" programme have the same duration, let alone content. Still we believe that the process description below can inspire you. Then you can adjust or tailor it in the way that best fits the needs of your specific context!

Who took part?

The training course's theme, Outdoor Education, offered a good framework for the "Youthpass" procedure. The participants were either coming from an outdoor and/or environmental education background, or were simply interested in the field. Their experience as educators (outdoor or youth worker) showed extreme variations from almost no experience to several decades of leadership, which meant an added challenge for the trainers of the course.

Youthpass and self-assessment of learning

The process was completed after *five* facilitated sessions and it followed the pedagogic content and approach of the course (active participation, continuous reflection, mutual exchange, to name but a few). These sessions took the form of *short series of activities*, each one building on the input of the previous day(s).

Step 1

What do you do outside of this Training Course?

[question on board]

Participants are asked to place themselves on an imaginary map that has two axes: personal-professional development and life cycle.

The first question is why they participate in this course? Out of motivation for their personal development or for more for professional reasons? Even though we know that the two could be one, experience says that this will get them focused on their motivation, and this is our purpose at this stage.

Second, they have to reflect on the life stage they are in. Are they mostly studying, volunteering, working, or all three?

Step 1   What do you do outside of this Training Course?
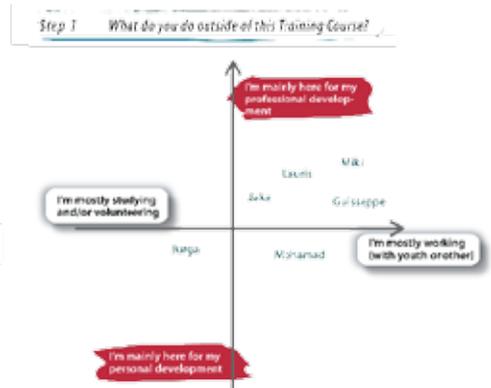
Type: Individual, whole group

Procedure: After a reflection time of 3-4 minutes, participants write their names on the map according to their place on both axes. The reflection can be made more focused if they write the answers down and share it with another participant.
The resulting "map" gave invaluable information on the motivation and professional background of participants. This was briefly discussed.

Step 2

The Mirrors

Self-assessment was supported by the *mirror system*. The mirror is another participant with whom you share your thoughts on *your* learning taking place. Whenever there was pair work involved during the Youthpass facilitation process, participants worked together with their *mirrors*.

In this training course, mirrors were chosen at random. Another effective solution can be that people in similar life situations (e.g. similar professional status) should be paired up, in order to facilitate the shared self-reflection process. This pairing-up can be made by using the visual outcome of the previous activity.

Step 3

Civil Society Diamond
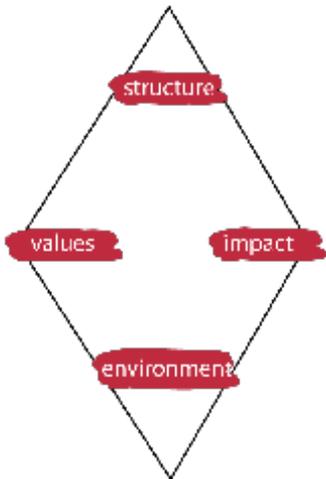
The first task the mirrors were asked to do was to talk about the impact of their work on local civil society. To do this, they were provided with the civil society diamond illustrated below. The task is to discover the role your partner (alone or through an organisation) plays in the local community, by asking and answering the following questions:

*   What socio-political structure do you work in (with young people)?
    (eg. public, private, voluntary, paid)

*   What values do you believe in (in the context of your work)?
    (eg. love of nature, healthy living, tolerance, care)

*   What impact does your work have (on the local community)? What impact would you like to have?

*   What is the environment of your work?
    (eg. ample/meagre state support, presence/absence of social tensions)

The purpose here is to focus participants on their "professional" life, and to share and get to know the mirrors better.

Type: pair work
Procedure: conversation

Step 4
A great influence

In pairs ("the mirrors"), participants were asked to talk about one influential educator in their lives, someone who had an impact on their learning and personal development. The conversation was guided by the instruction to explore the *skills, attitudes* and *knowledge* this educator had, and to reveal why s/he was influential for them.

Type: pair work
Procedure: conversation

The purpose here is to get closer and to share a positive, personal learning experience.

Step 5
Learning cycles and styles

With their mirrors, participants were asked to talk about the way in which they learn:

• What comes first: *experience* or *reflection*?

• Is it useful to experience a task before receiving guidance? When?

• Or is it more practical to go the other way around (instructions first)? When?

During the reporting back phase, the different "dimensions" or aspects of learning were identified and discussed, such as cognitive/emotional/behavioural modes of learning, age, personality, gender etc.

This activity functioned as a lead-in for the next day's session on experiential learning and learning styles.

Type: pair work
Procedure: conversation, reporting back to whole group

The purpose here was to focus participants on realising their learning styles.

Step 6

Outdoor competences, Key Competences

In pairs, participants brainstorm a list of the skills, attitudes and knowledge that outdoor education involves. The items on their lists are elicited and grouped into categories *according to a logic coming from par-ticipants themselves*. The outcome is a set of related skills, attitudes and knowledge (see red boxes in the illustration). In another training the theme of this activity would have to be adapted.

As a next step, the facilitator asks whether any of the groups could be placed under the umbrella of a *key competence*.[1]

The purpose is to connect the content of the training with the Key Competences. Here the aim was to connect the Key Competences to outdoor education, and to indicate that not all Key Competences are involved in all learning situations. It also aims to show that the Key Competences, based on personal perception, can be assigned with some flexibility to different skills, attitudes and knowledge.

Type: pair work, whole group
Procedure: discussion, reporting back to whole group

Outdoor Educator's Competences
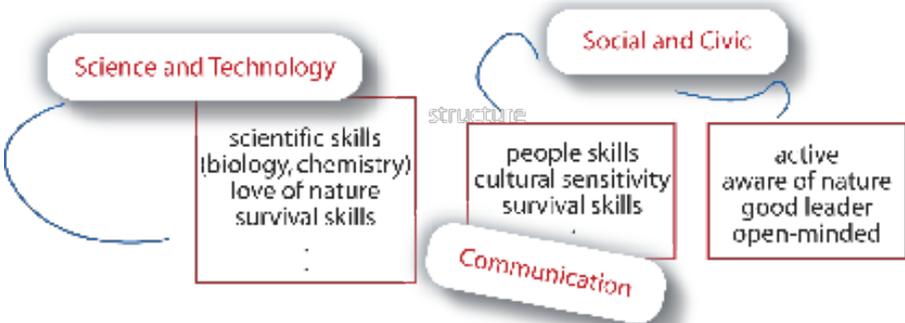
1   European Commission's recommendation on Key competences for Lifelong Learning, namely: Learning to learn; Social and Civic competence; Sense of Initiative and Entrepreneurship; Cultural awareness and expression; Communication in the mother tongue and in foreign languages; Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; Digital competence.

Step 7
The Language of Self-Assessment

Individually, participants try to complete the sentences on the Cheat-sheet for Self-Assessment. The aim is to provide some linguistic support (mixed levels of English), and to focus the group on next day's task: writing the Youthpass self-assessment report about their learning.

Participants are encouraged to select *some* of the Key Competences, and not all, to focus their attention.

Type: pair work
Procedure: individual work, then sharing in pairs

> **Cheat-sheet**
>
> I feel more comfortable now...
>
> I found out...
>
> I feel confident ...
>
> I made progress...
>
> I'm able to...
>
> I know now how...
>
> I developed...
>
> I have a clear view now...
>
> I can effectively demonstrate...
>
> I am aware now that...
>
> I understand that...
>
> I now have the ability to...

Step 8
Youthpass self-assessment

Participants compose a first draft of the self-assessment of their learning in the course. The trainers are available for *monitoring* and *mirroring*. The content of the Youthpass self-assessment comes from the participants themselves, while the trainers give help in finding the right register (semi-formal, brief, to the point).

General comments and tips

» Practically, we let participants finalize their self assessments after the course. It was highlighted though, that it is good that they start on the spot (*Final session, Step 8*) because the context helps them to remember what it has been explored.

» The "mirror" system was also tested in numerous courses after this one. "Mirrors" might be "triads" but more than three people is not advisable.

» We send the Youthpass certificates after the activity by post. This means that we need their postal addresses. How to get them? One easy way is to ask those participants who want a Youthpass certificate to fill in their data on the spot. This way you will have an idea of how many certificates are needed and the details will be ready for later.   Keep an eye on the fact, though, that people move, change and sometimes make mistakes!

» Create your own support documents! Actually we sent information about Youthpass and the Key Competences before the training. We used the support documents on a daily basis, clarifying and exploring them a bit more each day. The simpler the contents of these documents, the more likely the participants will be interested in reading them. A gradual unfolding of more complex topics (why Key Competences, what do they mean for the world, examples) make it probable that the interest remains high – or even have a climax in some cases!

» Take into consideration that generating the certificates takes time and youth workers are well known for lacking time! One very practical hint is to inform participants not to use bullets and numbering when writing their self-assessments once this significantly delays the "copy & paste" process. Plain text will do best! Let them know as well that "PDFing" their files is not helping at all!

» As Honey & Mumford inform us (The Learning Styles Helper's Guide), try to resist asking the most natural question, which is "How do you prefer to learn", cause most probably you won't get an answer but you will certainly get many of "Eh?" reactions. The exploration of each individual's learning style should come differently: if you are not in possession of the Learning Styles Question-naire, then the questions as those in Step 5 and similar – and the depth in which participants reach through dialogue – will assist them in understanding their preferences and most importantly, with the help of the trainer/facilitator, to understand the next steps to be taken toward the strengthening of the weaker domains.

» As a youth worker/trainer, don't forget to use the Portfolio! Going methodically through it will defi-nitely help you in many directions; undoubtedly it will help you enrich your language, deepen your understanding and enhance your expressiveness and transferability when it comes to presenting/exploring/analyzing Key Competences and the self-assessment process.

» Get the Youthpass Guide from www.youthpass.eu. Another useful tool, calling itself "a companion to the Youthpass Guide", can be found here: www.salto-youth.net/inclusionforall.

» To generate Youthpass certificates, you will need a username and a password to login to the online system. Go create them! For every activity (for which Youthpass is available) you realize, a special number must be included in the contract (if not, ask for it!). With this number, you can insert the activity's data in the already existing account (the one you created) and start the work!
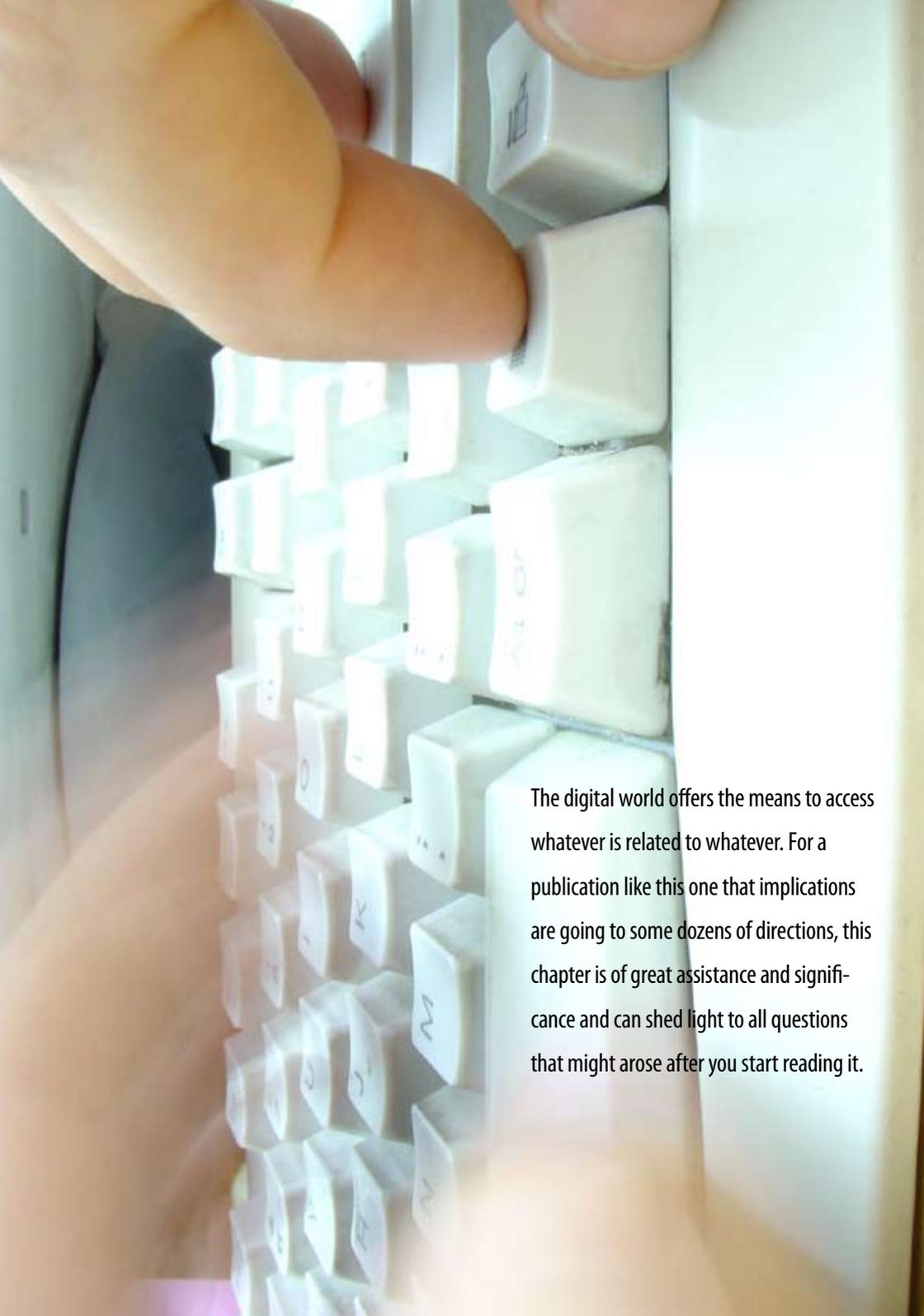
The digital world offers the means to access whatever is related to whatever. For a publication like this one that implications are going to some dozens of directions, this chapter is of great assistance and significance and can shed light to all questions that might arose after you start reading it.

further reading & references

Websites **(in no particular order)**

- www.infed.org An extensive library on and about non-formal education/learning. Top in the field! Highly recommended!

- www.youth-partnership.net The web site of the Partnership between Council of Europe and European Commission on youth worker training. The former www.youth-training.net and www.youth-knowledge.net sites have been included here.

- www.salto-youth.net Support, advance learning and training opportunities in the "Youth in Action" programme.

- http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/index.htm Education, audiovisual and culture executive agency of the European Commission.

- www.youthforum.org A pan European platform of youth organizations.

- http://www.coe.int/youth Council of Europe web page dedicated to youth related activities.

- http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/ev.php-URL_ID=6074&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html UNESCO's web page dedicated to non-formal education.

- www.nonformality.org An online discussion platform about issues relevant to non-formal education/learning. Highly recommended.

- http://communities.cedefop.europa.eu/ CEDEFOP's Virtual Communities. Among others, one dedicated to non-formal and informal learning.

- www.youthpass.eu The official web site for Youthpass.

- http://www.europas.es/yp A contribution to Youthpass and the recognition of non-formal learning from a practitioner in the field.

- http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm European Commission's official site dedicated to youth.

- http://europa.eu/youth/ European Union's youth portal

- http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/ EUROPASS official web site.

- www.my-learning.gr The offspring of "Here2Stay" project. Funded by the EYF of the Council of Europe

- www.kidsinaction.gr Official website of "Kids in Action", the NGO behind "Here2Stay".

- http://www.hajdeda.org.yu/ Official web site of Grupa "Hajde da…" whose work has inspired us the most

- www.coe.int/youthportfolio. Official web site of the European Portfolio for youth workers and youth leaders.

- http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html "Education and Training 2010" process official web site

- http://roheline.noored.ee/orb.aw/class=file/action=preview/id=7495/SUMSraport_eng.pdf The documentation of the Summer School on non-formal learning in Estonia

- http://www.salto-youth.net/static/downloads/toolbox_downloads.php/332/MADZINGA.pdf A thorough report on a long term training course that explored intercultural learning through experiential learning and outdoor education.

Documents **(in no particular order)**

- http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/validation2004_en.pdf
  Common European Principles for validation. . .

- http://youth-partnership.coe.int/export/sites/default/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Pol-icy/docs/Recognition/Pathways_towards_validati.pdf
  Pathways towards validation and recognition. . .

- http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/policy/memo_en.pdf
  A memorandum on life long learning

- http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001460/146092E.pdf
  Unesco's "Synergies between formal and non formal education"

- http://www.youthforum.org/fr/system/files/yfj_public/strategic_priorities/en/0618-03.pdf
  Youth organizations as non formal educators. . .

- http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2000_nonformal_learning_en.pdf
  Towards a revitalization of non formal learning. . .

- http://www.salto-youth.net/find-a-tool/770.html?&owner_user_id=7595&pagerCurrentOffset=2
  A Power Point presentation created through "Here2Stay" and aiming at recording the evolution in policy level with regards to recognition.

- http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_394/l_39420061230en00100018.pdf
  Recommendation on Key Competences for life long learning.

- http://ec.europa.eu/education/pdf/doc125_en.pdf
  The Copenhagen Declaration

- http://ec.europa.eu/youth/archive/whitepaper/download/whitepaper_en.pdf
  The White Paper on Youth

- http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/84335.pdf
  The European Youth Pact (after page 19)

- http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2006:168:0001:0003:EN:PDF
  Resolution of the Council on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning

- http://youth-partnership.coe.int/export/sites/default/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Nonformal/2005_trading_up_NFL_coepub.pdf
  Trading up – Potential and performance in non formal learning.

- http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/ll-learning/keycomp_en.pdf
  Key Competences for Life Long Learning – European Reference Framework, Brochure

- http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/eqf08_en.pdf
  European Qualifications Framework for Life Long Learning, Brochure

- http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-nonfor.htm
  A comprehensive article on non-formal education

- http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/colley_informal_learning.htm
  Another article from INFED, "Non-formal learning: mapping the conceptual terrain"

- http://www.salto-youth.net/download/630/reportbridges.pdf
  The final report of the "Bridges for Recognition" conference.

- http://www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/publications/Coyote/11/Index
  "Coyote" Magazine tribute to non-formal learning and education.

- http://www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/publications/Training/ATTE_vol2.html
  The external evaluation of the Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe

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Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

Paulo Freire , 1921-1997