



European Advanced Training Course “Lobbying for Youth Work”

January 2022 - June 2023

Context

*“The stronger the people, the stronger the youth policy!” -
Geert Boutsen (National coach for ‘Lobbying for Youth Work’)*

Youth work is more than just pedagogical work with young people. It also implies a political dimension, which needs concrete action. The everyday work of a local youth officer or youth worker is penetrated with political issues. Too often it feels like youth work is the victim of political decisions. On top of this, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people and youth work is tangible with sometimes budget cuts in youth work, youth facilities being closed, etc.

At the same time, youth work throughout Europe has a unique position in supporting spaces for young people’s voice and autonomy and in building bridges for young people to take, with competence and confidence, the next steps in their lives. Also on the European level a dynamic debate around youth work, resulting recently in the adoption of a European Youth Work Agenda, has created a positive political tailwind for youth work, which can also be a stimulus on a national and local level.

That’s why it is essential to engage in lobbying for youth work. And to prepare and empower local youth officers and local youth workers to advocate for youth work and to successfully influence, co-shape and position local youth (work) policy. Lobbying is not a game happening in the backrooms of power, but competence to master, an attitude to adopt.

Do you agree? Do you want to strengthen your competencies to lobby for youth work? And at the same time share with and learn from your colleagues and their youth work context and practice in 5 European countries?

If you say ‘YES’, then ‘**Lobbying for Youth Work**’ is what you are looking for!

‘Lobbying for Youth Work’ in a nutshell:

‘Lobbying for Youth Work’ is a European long-term training course, organised within the framework of the Strategic National Agency Cooperation ‘Europe Goes Local: Supporting Youth Work at the Municipal Level’ in Erasmus+ Youth (www.europegoeslocal.eu).

The first pilot edition of ‘Lobbying for Youth work’ (2019-2020) offered a very powerful learning experience to the participants with a clear impact on their local context. That’s why, as from January 2022 on, a second edition will be kicked-off, co-ordinated by JINT, the Belgian-Flemish National Agency, in close cooperation with the German, Latvian, Croatian and French National Agency.

'Lobbying for Youth Work' wants:

- to sharpen the profile and political position of youth work;
- to train and qualify municipal youth officers and local youth workers to analyse political frameworks and situations at the local level so they can influence local youth policy-making through political lobbying;
- to encourage the establishment and consolidation of local networks for youth politics (youth policy);
- to create a sustainable training concept at the European level in an attempt to re-politicize youth work/youth policy;
- and to explore European impulses for local youth work;

A modular learning journey

“Successful policy-making in youth work and by the youth work community is comparable to the preparation of a magic cocktail with many different ingredients.” - Prof. Werner Lindner (Initiator and expert for 'Lobbying for Youth Work')

'Lobbying for Youth Work' offers you a rich modular learning experience during a journey of more than one year. Together with your colleagues from the 5 participating countries, you will start from and concretely work on your personal 'big ask', i.e. your personal action plan which will be at the core of your own lobby project. This can be a need in your local community that you want to tackle, a project you want to push forward, and an ambition you want to realise...

The entire learning process is built around the following focal pillars and will be inspired by several experts from different European countries:

- Mapping and analysis of the (local) policy field
- Development of targets
- Analysis and development of (local) networks
- Development of action plans
- Political communication

The project consists of different modules in order to support your hard, but rewarding work on your big asks:

- 3 international residential modules:
 - **Module 1: 7 to 10 February 2022 in Belgium**
 - **Module 2: 23-25 May 2022 in Latvia**
 - **Module 3: dates to be decided, in France**
- 2 to 3 in-between webinars (each of 2 to 3 hours) to deepen insights from the international modules
- personal coaching and national group support during the whole project by a national coach

Profile of participants

'Lobbying for Youth Work' targets 20 to 24 participants with 4-5 participants for each country (Belgium-Flanders, Croatia, France, Germany and Latvia).

We are looking for participants who:

- are municipal youth officers and/or local youth workers with a concrete, long-term ambition to change their local context and with an understanding of the structures, values and current challenges of local youth work

- are committed and strongly motivated to actively and fully participate in all the different programme parts (ie. modules, webinars, coaching) of this training and to develop personal and professional skills
- can confirm that they will be able to work on their big ask and get the support they need to do so
- are able to work in English (without being perfect).

We expect that always the same participants attend the activities, as this is crucial for the learning process and the connection between the modules.

Costs

This training course is supported by the Erasmus+ Youth programme. All travel and hosting costs are covered. You can be asked to pay a small participation fee depending on your country of origin. Please contact your National Agency to know if they ask for a participation fee.

Covid-19 measures

The three international modules are planned to be residentially hosted. In case the COVID-19 situation prevails and prevents travelling, the organiser reserves the right to cancel the residential activity and organise the activity online.

All selected participants will need to follow the travel regulations valid by the time of the activity (e.g. be able to show the European digital corona certificate when leaving their home country and entering the hosting country). More detailed information about the travel guidelines will be provided to the selected participants closer to the event.

The organisers will ensure that safety and hygienic measures needed in relation to Covid-19 are in place during the activity, following all national health and safety guidelines of the hosting country which are valid by the time of the activity. All participants will be accommodated in single rooms.

More info?

If you want to know more about Lobbying for Youth Work, please read:

- two motivating testimonies of participants in Lobbying for Youth Work 2019-2020: 'How lobbying saved my career' of Evy Huybrechts (Belgium-Flanders) and 'How international youth work in Tyrol can be developed and professionalised' by Kadri Villem and Martina Steiner (Austria)*
- an interview with Geert Boutsen, national coach of the Belgian delegation in 'Lobbying for Youth Work':
<https://www.europesgoeslocal.eu/egl-action/lobbying-for-youth-work-essential-skills-for-quality-development-of-local-youth-work/>

For more information please contact the National Agency for the Erasmus+ Youth programme in your country:

- National Agency Germany: Claudius Siebel - siebel@jfemail.de
- National Agency Latvia: Nils Mosejonoks - nils.mosejonoks@jaunatne.gov.lv
- National Agency Croatia: Aleksandra Svast - aleksandra.svast@mobilnost.hr
- National Agency France: Anne Roland - anne.rolland@service-civique.gouv.fr
- National Agency Belgium-Flanders: Inez Adriaensen - inez.adriaensen@jint.be

Do you want to join?

Please apply through the following SALTO link at the latest by **20 November 2021**:
<http://onlineform.salto-youth.net/1830>

4.1.

How lobbying saved my career

Evy Huybrechts

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At the start of the 'Lobbying for Youth Work' training programme I was close to being burnt out youth servant working for the small municipality of Keerbergen, Belgium. For years I spent my days doing too much for not enough results, rushing from the organisation of one event to the next without having a moment to spare to set real goals or achieve anything meaningful for the young people in my municipality. No matter how hard I worked, I always felt like I could never really get to the essence of my job: to make our community as child-friendly as possible.

I knew something was wrong, but I had no idea how to fix it. So in an attempt to solve this problem, I turned to various team leaders and decision-makers for guidance. Long story short: I ended up wasting many years complaining that they needed to change something instead of changing it myself. By the end of 2018 I wasn't just a little frustrated that I was stuck in a job that had more to do with the event business than with youth policy, I was downright questioning myself as a youth servant and whether or not I was the right person in the right place to begin with.

But then I received an e-mail.

From the moment I read the call for this training course I knew I had to enrol, even if back then I couldn't define the term 'lobbying' to save my life. I instinctively knew this was going to be the game changer I so desperately needed to turn things around. At the very least it was my last attempt before

giving up completely. Little did I know it would turn out to be the greatest thing I have ever done for my career as a youth servant.

One of the many things I learnt during this course is that preparation is key. I therefore left the first international meeting with a game plan that would lead me to my dream goal: getting my local council to hire an extra team member to work full-time for team youth. That way, one of us would be able to focus on the activities and the other could focus on strategy and lead the way to a child-friendly municipality.

The game plan consisted of three major steps:

1. To transform the youth council from a non-efficient sleeping entity to a meaningful one that could function as a partner in crime for team youth (which was at this point still a one-woman team) and help me perform steps 2 and 3;
2. To conduct a perception study among the children and adolescents in the municipality to get an overview of their needs (in co-operation with the new and improved youth council);
3. To present the results of this perception study as a set of new goals to the local council and convince them that we needed an extra team member to achieve these goals.

The first step would be relatively easy, but given my busy schedule step 2 would be a challenge. I would really have to figure out a way to squeeze this big project in and therefore had very high hopes for the new and improved youth council.

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But above all, the single most important thing I learnt during this programme and the one thing that got me to where I am today is to once again believe in myself. Spending time with colleagues and experts, who I look up to, helped me regain the confidence I lost somewhere along the way. Today, I no longer doubt my position as a youth servant and I strongly believe that I am fully capable of doing this beautiful job. That is by far the number one thing I take home from this course and the achievement that I cherish most. Everything else is a bonus.

On 14 December 2020 my local council agreed to hire the extra team member I wanted.

I already have the next game plan in mind. And thanks to this training programme, I now know I got this.



4.2.

How international youth work in Tyrol can be developed and professionalised

Kadri Villem and Martina Steiner

In preparation for the first ‘Lobbying for Youth Work’ training module in February 2019 we considered which lobbying project we could implement at the local level during the training course. As the two non-profit organisations *POJAT* and *komm!unity* are both active in the field of open youth work, it was clear from the start that we wanted to work together. We decided to focus on international youth work, specifically ESC volunteering projects, because we wanted to strengthen co-operation in this area across Tyrol, learn from each other, and join forces to improve the quality of volunteering projects in the context of open youth work in our region. *komm!unity*, which is based in the city of Wörgl, has organised projects under the EU’s youth programmes Erasmus+ Youth in Action and European Solidary Corps and hosted volunteers since 2008. In 2019, *POJAT* took over the co-ordination of five ESC volunteers placed in various youth centres in and around Innsbruck.

In the beginning it was not easy to define an actual lobbying project and set precise aims. However, thanks to feedback from the course instructors, our team coaches and other participants, we were able to firm up our plans and define so-called SMART aims in three dimensions: youth participation, youth work, and local youth policy. The methodological approach of the training course, thorough expertise, and a good introduction to lobbying in the youth work context meant we were well prepared for implementing the project in its three dimensions.

Youth participation

We set out to develop and organise a workshop for incoming ESC volunteers in Tyrol to introduce them to the methods and principles of professional open youth work and discuss the role of the volunteers in this context. Over the years, a recurring theme at the beginning of the *komm!unity* volunteering projects was the difficulty for volunteers to find their place in the youth centres and understand professional open youth work. This was often because their expectations and experience of youth work in their home countries was different from what they saw here in Austria.

The first workshop took place in November 2019 in Innsbruck. All six volunteers currently volunteering in youth centres in Tyrol took part. The feedback from the volunteers was positive; they found it helpful personally and for their volunteering work. A long-term outcome of this project was that we now have a workshop concept that can be used as a kick-off event at the beginning of every volunteering year.

The main challenge in this regard was the COVID-19 pandemic. As volunteering project co-ordinators, we had to figure out how to keep the projects running during lockdown (spring 2020) when many youth centres had to close. In this crisis we were happy to have the co-operation and the group spirit among the volunteers that was already tangible at the kick-off workshop and subsequent in-person meetings. In this situation, *komm!unity* and *POJAT* were able to sup-



port each other better thanks to the ongoing lobbying project. We organised weekly Zoom meetings with the volunteers and put up an international volunteers blog.

Youth work

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In the field of youth work, our original goal was to conduct a survey among the youth workers from hosting organisations in Tyrol to get to know their needs and challenges as well as the benefits and opportunities for youth workers / organisations hosting ESC volunteers. Working towards that goal, we consulted colleagues from our organisations and concluded that rather than a survey or written research, a face-to-face meeting with youth workers to discuss these topics would be a more suitable way to achieve the goal. In January 2020, we hosted a meeting with representatives of all five hosting organisations (*komm!unity* & four organisations co-ordinated by *POJAT*) to evaluate the volunteering projects and share experiences. We performed a collaborative analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the volunteering projects in youth centres at the organisational level. This delivered many insights and sparked a fruitful discussion among the youth workers, who also shared practical tips and ways to tackle possible problems. We found the discussion to be urgently necessary, and it was a beneficial experience for all participants to get together. Generally, while European volunteers meet often and network with each other to discuss their experiences, there are not many formal opportunities for youth workers and organisations to exchange experiences at the local level. The main outcome was a stronger network of ESC hosting and co-ordinating organisations in Tyrol.

Local youth policy

This field was most challenging for us to tackle regarding our lobbying project. Our concrete goal was to present and discuss the results of the youth workers meeting in a *POJAT* youth conference to stimulate interest from other organisations about EU youth projects and start to develop criteria for hosting ESC volunteers in youth centres. We realised that in addition to the European Solidarity Corps handbook, concrete standards and guidelines are needed in open youth work to encourage local institutions to host European volunteers, take part in European Solidarity Corps programmes, receive funding, and gain international experience.

Summary

This training provided us the framework for our project and enabled us to:

- Co-operate and learn from each other at an organisational level between *komm!unity* and *POJAT*;
- Improve the support for European volunteers in open youth work in Tyrol and in turn enhance the quality of ESC volunteering projects in open youth work in general;
- Evaluate the position of the hosts at youth centres and create tools for them to use;
- Make ESC visible to other youth workers and youth organisations and show them that joining the programme is not as hard as they might have thought.