

Worlds of experience



No. 29 (October 2012)

INDEX

EDITORIAL

VOLUNTEERS VOICES on:

"Active Citizenship through Volunteering"

News from International Organizations

- UN Report: "Realising the future we want for all".
- UN calls for inputs for Secretary General Youth Initiative.
- Youth event at UNAOC Forum in Vienna.
- CoE - New publication on fostering intercultural competences
- ILO - World of Work Report 2012 – Youth Employment
- WB - Young People during Economic Crises

News from NGOs

- The Global Peace Index 2012
- Toolkit: "Engaging local society in sustainable development"
- Towards a sustainable future for African youth
- The metamorphosis of MDGs into SDGs
- Green Economy Pocketbook.

ICYE Programme News

- ICYE UK Charity of the year
- ICYE at European Education, Training and Youth Forum 2012
- PeaceWorks / ICYE Sweden Volunteer Bus



Education and Culture DG

'Youth in Action' Programme

'This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.'

Dear Friends,

"As citizens, we all have an obligation to intervene and become involved – it's the citizen who changes things."

Jose Saramago, Nobel-laureate novelist, playwright & journalist

Annually over 1000 young people from around the world engage in short and long-term voluntary service programmes and activities through the ICYE Federation alone, and through this they make a difference in society. In its programme guide, the European Commission recognizes volunteering as 'an essential element in active citizenship: by giving one's time for the benefit of others, volunteers service their community and play an active role in society'. Volunteering therefore has the potential to develop citizens' commitment to society and to political life in society. 2013 has been declared the European Year of Citizens. In this issue, entitled "Active Citizenship through Volunteering", we shift the emphasis to 'active' citizens and make links between international volunteering and global citizenship.

In "Volunteers Voices", eight current volunteers from across the four continents present their insight on their roles as volunteers and active players in citizenship building through thoughtful narrations and playful anecdotes. A good starting point is the German volunteer in Colombia who states that volunteering in social projects and thus active citizenship is not about politics but about people. A US-American in Denmark tells us that the amount of spiritual and existential growth is worth every second of his time abroad. An Austrian in Ecuador explains that the smiles and hugs she gets from the elderly women in her project make it all worthwhile. An Italian volunteer in Finland sees volunteering as a resource that creates a change in perspectives and shows one a different way to solve problems. Likewise, a German in India states that in addition to serving others, volunteering also sharpens your own worldview. Another German in South Africa says she's there to learn about another culture, another land, about herself, and to give back – even if it's through a little dance. Another feels that by volunteering, she is not 'helping' but supporting people on the other side of the world, and as such she feels part of New Zealand. Lastly, an Indian in Iceland sums it up for us: Active citizenship through volunteering defines what volunteers are about, divided by thought and individuality but brought together by community and caring. We hope that on reading these essays, each one of us, as citizens of the world, take steps to intervene, to critically reflect and to initiate social change.

News from International Organisations feature, among others: the UN Report on "Realising the Future we want for all"; the UNESCO Contest "Pathways to Culture of Peace"; the Council of Europe publication on intercultural competence; and the World Bank publication on young people during economic crisis.

News from NGOs report on: the Global Peace Index 2012; a toolkit to involve local communities in Sustainable Development processes; a new initiative by the Network of African Youths for Development; a passionate call to move from MDGs to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and the Green Economy Pocketbook.

ICYE Programme News include: the award by the Geographical Society to ICYE UK; a report on the recent European Education, Training and Youth Forum 2012, organised by the European Commission; and the ICYE Sweden wondering Volunteer Bus.

Wishing you an interesting reading, we would like to encourage readers to send us articles and pictures for the next issue of "Worlds of Experience", dedicated to "Working towards Intergenerational Solidarity" and to be published at the end of February 2013.

Please send your contributions to icye@icye.org, before 31st January 2013.

Warmest wishes!

ICYE International Office

“Active Citizenship through Volunteering”

VOLUNTEERS VOICES

“Volunteering, A Global Culture”

I had thought long and hard about this article, a theme such as active citizenship through volunteering is complex and dynamic but that's exactly how I think I would describe volunteering as an activity. My name is Snehin and I am an ICYE volunteer from India currently volunteering in the Waldorf kindergarten in Iceland. My first impressions about volunteering, to be completely honest, were shattered as soon as I began working at my project (not in a bad way). I had simple tasks like buttering bread or getting kids ready to play outside, not rocket science, or so I thought. I found that communication, understanding, caring for others are all different in different communities and they are clearest in the kids of those communities.



In an ever growing global community my impression before beginning this project was there isn't much that differs from back home, that we are a global community already and have seen or experienced most of the cultures of other communities. Don't get me wrong, we have experienced a lot, but this just made me realise how much we haven't. It made me question the term global citizen, but I did understand one thing, volunteering is the same; it's the same feeling, the same thought, the same atmosphere and the same mindset anywhere in the world.

I have talked to and lived with people from all over the world in my short stay in Iceland and the one thing I can completely guarantee is that a volunteer is a person who ignores all the cultural indifferences, misunderstandings and anger to simply bring some amount of togetherness in today's society. It is dynamic and complex. It becomes hard and at times unbearable. However, it is a statement; we are one, we as the world are a single community first then different small communities.

This got me thinking, a little further ahead and brought out another impression. We are one but we are different. I think I couldn't and wouldn't like that to change: differences in communities and culture and individuals coming together to create a better more solid living environment for everyone including ourselves. I would define a volunteer as an active citizen of not a country but the entire world, they are people, men, women and children who strive to better a worldwide community. As globalization is a real fact, so is the gap and differences in our

communities around the world, but the same small gestures and same helping hand is appreciated and brings the globalised economy and community closer.

I may have gone a little off topic but in short I think the theme active citizenship through volunteering defines what volunteers are about, divided by thought and individuality but brought together by community and caring.

Snehin G. K, Indian volunteer in Iceland.

Becoming part of New Zealand through Volunteering.

I have been volunteering at “House No. 30” of the Mt Tabor Trust in New Zealand since August 2012.. On the first day it was difficult to imagine how to become part of this close-knit team. But they were all really interested in us and helped us in the following weeks to become part of the community, our “new family”, and we also learned how to keep New Zealand time.



Mt Tabor Trust is a community, where people with intellectual disabilities are living together in a communal residence with support persons and sometimes volunteers, like us. They are living in seven different houses, which are not that close to each other, but that's no reason for not visiting each other all the time. They really like to do activities together. Mount Tabor tries to enable people with intellectual disabilities to be part of normal daily life. So nearly all the people who are living with me in house No. 30 work and plan their own activities during the day.

We take them to a lot of activities like the disco, bowling, cooking, water-walking etc. Everyone meets at No. 30 because it's the newest and the most spacious house within the community and a lot of funny things happen there. So I have something to laugh about every day. The people are still really

interested in me and want me to be part of everything. It's nice to see how much confidence they have in me over the short time I've been living with them. One of them was really afraid of deep water (Mariet, my house leader said "I can't make him go into deep water, he's really afraid") and now he goes in just for me. That's kind of the little special things which are happening here every day.

A bake off, in which I won the prize for the most creative cake, a lot of meetings, the days off with other volunteers, my house leader Mariet, Rebecca a support person and the fullness of everyday life have enabled me to find my place in the new big family. At the moment we are working on a new project: A performance for "Inter act". That's the first time I can share some of my own skills. For me this is a really good feeling.

I have never worked with disabled people before, but it's a really good and new experience for me. I don't feel like a better person because I am learning a lot in Mt Tabor for myself, but I realize that I really can help the disabled to enjoy life. Through my volunteering I have become part of New Zealand and feel like an active global citizen. What is important to me: is that I'm not "helping" I'm "supporting"! In this way, I'm getting involved in the global community: I'm supporting disabled people on the other side of the world.

Johanna H  bberger, German volunteer in New Zealand

"The hugs that make my day"



I am an Austrian volunteer in Ecuador for one year. I am living with a family that consists of parents and two kids, and I am working at an elderly women care center, which is not that common for volunteers, I think, because most work with children.

I like my work place very much, even if the level of basic things is much lower than in Austria, which shocked me a bit at first. But the "abuelitas" (that's the Spanish word for grandmother) are really nice and they always smile at me and give me hugs even though sometimes they can be quite complicated and do not always talk very clearly (or not at all), which makes it very, very difficult for me to understand them.

It is a bit different from what I expected because in the working profile they said something about accompanying the "abuelitas" and helping them in

things like knitting and so on and I have not seen even one "abuelita" knitting or playing games or something like that.

But the work I do is not so different from what I have already done in Austria as a summer job. For example, I give them their meals, make their beds, talk with them... Yesterday was a really great day at work because one woman, who is really old and I don't know how much she understands from the world around her, who I always bring food because she cannot eat alone, hugged me just so strong that she nearly lifted me into the air.



I think I am an active citizen, because, as I work in my project with the abuelitas, the sisters have more time to work with the children and maybe they can take more children into the project than they could have if I weren't there (the project also has something like a kindergarten). This affects the children there and through the children the parents because they can work and earn money for a good living.



My host family is really nice, they are always asking me how I feel and ... well I cannot describe with words - you would have to experience it yourself. My host mum, Emma's food is really good most of the time. In fact, I like the Ecuadorian food I only wish it would be a bit more changing, not always rice, rice, rice).

The Ecuadorians in general are very friendly and they react very positively when I say I am here for a year doing volunteering. The only thing I really hate about it is that absolutely nobody knows where Austria is or they believe it is Australia I come from!

I feel that volunteering is quite a chance to help people and see some really beautiful parts of the world and at this moment I would certainly do it again (although I have been just one and a half month here, so maybe I will change my mind after sometime although I hope this won't happen ☺).

Elisabeth Kapplmueller, Austrian volunteer in Ecuador

Change your life by changing other people's lives.

It's not easy to decide one day to change your life and become a volunteer, especially in another country. There are many people that are distrustful about this idea, because they think that it is a way to waste your time and escape your responsibilities.

In our society – where the value of things is measured by money – it is not easy to understand that you can improve society with your contribution, just sharing your skills.

I have had many experiences as a volunteer: with teenagers in Brazil, people in an emergency center for immigrants, in a prison and now here in Finland with disabled people. It is an amazing way to become a better citizen.



Every day we receive an incredible amount of information from the internet, TV and magazines, and we probably believe that this is enough to be able to think but unfortunately it's not. It is through practice that you begin to understand the world around you in a better way because you have to deal with real problems, and sometimes you have to fight with misunderstandings. You have to find solutions. It means that you have to face reality, not just theory like in school. This actually means thinking.

Being a volunteer doesn't mean that you are a person that helps other people. This is a simplistic and also wrong idea because it suggests the existence of an unbalanced relation between those

who help and those who are helped. When you offer your skills to other people you receive a lot from them, probably more than you give. You find ideas, experiences, motivation and friends. The decision to offer a part of your time to support people who are experiencing difficulty in their lives represents an amazing way to fight selfishness and build a better world. It's very easy but the impact is enormous.

Another very common question is: why do I have to go abroad? There are so many opportunities in my country too. This is true but sometimes we need to understand what happens in countries with totally different habits and traditions because we want to learn something special that we can apply in life beyond our own experiences. Change perspectives, see with different eyes. And of course, volunteering is not something that you only do for a period: the aim is to value your experiences, to all your life and to all the people you have met, also in your country. The experience abroad transforms you into a resource because you have a different way to solve problems.

So why wouldn't you decide to be a volunteer? Abroad, in your country, in your city... it's the same! The important is that you want to test yourself.

Elisabetta Colautti, Italian EVS volunteer in Finland.

Volunteering sharpens your view on the world.

My name is Raphael and since August 2012 I am volunteering for one year in a non-governmental school in rural India. My project, Lovedale Foundation Bangalore, provides free education for orphans and children from poor families. Many of them come from the numerous granite quarries in the area and their parents have to be persuaded to send their child to school even though it would increase their chances for a better future.



I take the children to school, teach one class in spoken English and life skills and provide tuitions at one of the orphanages on a daily basis. Since most of the children do not know English like most of the adult citizens of this rural area, I take classes in

the local language Kannada. Even though I only do small jobs, I hope to contribute to a better future for the children. The main aim is to enhance their English skills but another goal is to make them feel comfortable in their own society as grown-ups. I really hope that my work helps towards a better future and improved opportunities in their lives.

In my opinion a society cannot work without honorary workforces, they actively create public spirit and bring the community together. The question, why I am volunteering abroad instead of working in a charitable project in my country, is truly justified. Why did I have to go so far away, when there is a lot of help needed in front of my house?

This is definitely right and I do not want to assess anyone better, who is doing voluntary work in a foreign country compared to someone who does it in his or her homeland. At the moment, I am no real part of Indian society and I do not think that I will be one any time this year; I will remain a guest. But many people seem pleased to hear that a young person like me comes to their country to teach small children. Sometimes there are discussions with people on the street about our countries and a little inter cultural dialogue takes place.

Like many other volunteers abroad I write a blog on which I report my experiences of living in another country and a different culture - working with children I can hardly communicate with and learning a new language. Regularly I receive e-mails, in which people announce that they get to know new aspects of my current homeland through my blog and appreciate the work I am doing. I try to be of service to my community at home and still want to play an active role in my own society. This is my point of view after nearly two months of voluntary work abroad. How will I perceive my original society after my return? On the one hand, I am going to have a different outlook and consider things critically. Volunteering gives one the chance to serve people in need as well as to sharpen your own view on the world we all live in. On the other hand, I will have many opportunities to share my experience. For example, my surroundings will benefit from my time in India and therefore promote cultural exchange (again).

Giving other people the opportunity to participate in my year abroad and be it only as an observer, I play an active part in more than one society.

Raphael Bergman, German volunteer in India.

"Volunteering for a better world"

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead.

Volunteering is always a meaningful experience, and rarely one that you can regret. People are always grateful to you for offering your time and effort simply because you want to help within your community. But community is a loaded word in many ways, especially when asking what it truly means to be active in your community. A

community is generally defined as a social unit larger than that of a small village that shares common values. Although what it means to be helping in your community isn't so easily defined, what does it really mean to be an active citizen? And what community are you really a part of? I believe that human beings are all part of the same community, and what it means to be active in the community has a wide range of meanings.



Volunteering is the most effective way of being an active citizen in the community of the world. If you offer your time solely for the purpose of bettering the world in whatever way you can, often that type of devotion is the most effective and long-lasting. Volunteers often are the people who continually work more ambitiously than someone who would be getting paid to do the same job, and that's simply because it's something they want to do actively and with all their heart.

My experience from volunteering in Denmark has been absolutely extraordinary. My project with ICYE is at Eisbjerghus Efterskole. An Efterskole is a traditional Danish boarding school that focuses on specific areas of study, such as theater, music, video production, nature studies, etc. This school focuses very much on international study and goes on many trips throughout Europe; they are even planning to go to the United States and India this year. My project is to be an assistant teacher in different classes involving improving the students' English as well as classes involved with travelling to the United States. I also follow the music teacher here at the school and help the students and staff in whatever way I can.



Although I've only been here briefly, I can say that my time abroad is one of the most exhilarating and educational experiences I've ever had in my life. It has given me the opportunity to be active in the world in a different way than I would have if I'd stayed in my own home town and volunteered. I

am affecting the world with what I do, and changing it ever so slightly for the better. The greatest feeling of fulfillment comes from the gratitude that people feel for your volunteering and hard work abroad. The amount of spiritual and existential growth is worth every second of my time abroad. If you travel abroad to make the world better, you make yourself a much stronger and happier person because of it.

Paul J. Parksmith, US-American volunteer in Denmark

"Volunteers: Active Participants in Societies"



Volunteering gives me the unique opportunity to participate actively in an ever-changing society. Through my work I am able to support projects and to bring in new ideas. Voluntary work strikes at the heart of social problems by promoting education, mutual respect and cultural understanding. It does not only stimulate the projects themselves, but also a huge part of the neighborhood the project is located in. Although voluntary work influences only a limited amount of persons, its results are multiplying. Improvements in micro-structures of a society spread through its people exchanging new and stimulating ideas and constructing a vast network of social organizations.

I work in four different projects in different areas of Bogota. In one of my projects, my active citizenship consists of quite an explicit way of support: educational assistance. Every Saturday I give young orphans English lessons and homework support. The lessons allow me to contribute, at least, a little bit towards the children's future prospects as far as their economic independence and their position on the labour market are concerned. But it is not only about economics: The children need to face challenges, they develop, they improve and then they realize that they are able to achieve things. These experiences increase self-esteem and self-respect. Furthermore, I work twice a week in a neighbourhood called "Suba-Pinar". In this neighbourhood there live particularly vulnerable people, resulting from the lack of education and social participation.

Luckily, I could establish German lessons for the children aged eight to fifteen. The main objective

of these lessons isn't the learning of the German language. The children shall rather be introduced to something totally new for them: A different culture. It's about getting to know each other, the different ways of living, ways of thinking, mutual respect and cultural understanding. All this is developed during interpersonal interactions. The familiarization process starts with simple questions posed by the young people of the projects: "Why do you have blond hair and blue eyes?" "Which language do they speak in Germany?" "Do Germans listen to reggaeton?" The children learn to look beyond their horizon and to think outside the box.

Active citizenship through volunteering arises in very different ways. It shows up as educational support, as new ideas and input, as cultural exchange and the improvement of mutual respect and understanding. The most important thing is that volunteering in social projects is not about politics, but about people.

Robin Werbeck, German volunteer in Colombia

"Love every child with your smile" Being a volunteer in South Africa.

My adventure being a volunteer in an unknown land started six weeks ago. Nevertheless, I can say that it was the right decision to leave my home, my family and friends to discover new traditions, communities and work. I have been working at the Eros school for disabled children here for almost a month and I think I have found my place in the school.



My supervisor made a special timetable for me; now I am working in the first to third grades in the mornings and in the kindergarten during the second term. Eros school is a really huge school with lots of children who are interested in many different things, which is actually a great thing because it offers you the possibility to do your own projects and depending on your skills, you will always find a group of interested children.

As I wrote before it is a school for disabled children, but mostly you cannot see the disability. After a time you forget that they are disabled because they are like any other children – in

This is a sentence I have learned from Eros and I will always keep in my mind.

When I stood at the airport in Germany six weeks ago I thought "what are you doing here? You leave your home and fly to a totally unknown land, with unknown traditions and persons. Why can't you stay at home and take the normal way and study?" But when I landed in Cape Town this feeling was gone.

Taking the normal way is boring. Of course I had to manage some challenges and I will have more of them, but that is what makes a year abroad interesting. And every time a child smiles at me in school it confirms me in my decision. My volunteering could be seen as an act of global citizenship, because I am here – not for the money, but for the feeling that I can do something good. I do not mean that I improve or change something, I do not want this.

I am here to learn more about another culture, another land and about myself. I am not special or better than the teachers, actually the teacher could manage the lessons without me. I cannot teach the children mathematic or English, but I can tell them something about Germany, like a little cultural exchange, I can tell them new stories or I can teach them a little Christmas dance – that is what I want. To learn and get input, but to try at the same time to give something back, even if it is through a little dance. It was my wish to come here, to Cape Town, to South Africa, and to get a unique and awesome experience and I am sure I will never forget this year.

Frederike Heibenbittel, German volunteer in South Africa.

News from International Organizations

Realising the Future We Want for All



The first report from the UN system on the post-2015 development agenda, *Realising the Future We Want for All*, recommends that new goals should build on the strengths of the Millennium Development Goals, apply to all countries, and be based on the fundamental principles of human rights, equality, and sustainability. [Read more.](#)

UN Calls for Inputs for Secretary-General's Youth Initiative



The United Nations is developing a System-Wide Action Plan on Youth. This Action Plan will affect the way the entire UN system will work with and for youth in the coming years. The Action Plan will focus on the five priority areas identified by the Secretary-General: (1) employment; (2) entrepreneurship; (3) education, including education on sexual and reproductive health; (4) citizenship and protection of rights; and (5) political inclusion.

Before developing this Action Plan, the United Nations is reaching out to youth, youth-led organizations and others for their inputs. It has developed a questionnaire in all six UN languages to better understand the concerns of young people around the above-mentioned issues.

To access the questionnaire, click [here](#).

[illegible]

Youth Event at UNAOC Forum in Vienna.



Up to 150 youth (between 18 and 35 years old) from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds with outstanding track records in intercultural dialogue and youth work will be selected as participants of the Youth Event (February 26) and the 5th UNAOC Forum (February 27 and 28) in Vienna. [Read more](#)

Without these, no sustainable societal change is possible. [Read More](#)

Inequality in access to education is an obstacle to fight poverty" says new ILO report.

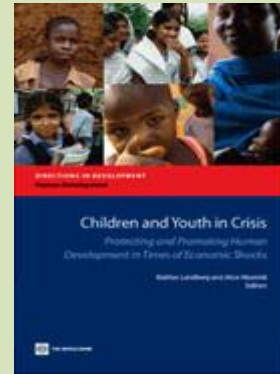


The International Institute for Labour Studies of the International Labour Organisation has released its "[World of Work Report 2012](#)" entitled this year "Better jobs for a better economy".

This edition tackles jobs quality, employment protection and growth in a context of slow recovery of the global economy. Inequalities in access to education around the world are mentioned as factors of perpetual income inequality and obstacles to growth and fight against poverty. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund estimate that 350 000 more students will fail to complete primary school in 2015 due to the recent crisis.

[Youth employment](#): 40 per cent of the jobless worldwide are young people. There will be nearly 75 million unemployed youth aged 15 to 24 in 2012, an increase of nearly 4 million since 2007. The youth unemployment crisis can be beaten but only if job creation for young people becomes a key priority in policy-making.

Young People during Economic Crises



The World Bank launched a new book on "Children and Youth in Crisis: Protecting and Promoting Human Development in Times of Economic Shocks". The report reviews the available evidence on the impact of crises on the development of young people, and how best to protect and promote human development during economic downturns.

Drawing from the fields of economics, sociology, psychology, and anthropology, this research provides an interdisciplinary framework for identifying and understanding age-specific vulnerabilities from conception through to young adulthood, the importance of context and how it changes across the life course, and the different transmission mechanisms through which economic shocks can affect young people.

To access the report and other supporting materials please [click here](#).

NEWS FROM NGOs

The Global Peace Index 2012



The Global Peace Index (GPI) is the world's leading measure of national peacefulness. Now in its sixth year, it ranks 158 nations according to their 'absence of violence'. The GPI is developed by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) and is composed of 23 indicators, ranging from a nation's level of military expenditure to its relations with neighbouring countries and the percentage of prison population. The Index is currently used by many international organisations, governments and NGOs including the World Bank, the OECD, and the United Nations. The Index is currently used by many international organisations, governments and NGOs including the World Bank, the OECD, and the United Nations. [Read more](#)

Toolkit "Engaging Local Society in Sustainable Development"



The toolkit is composed of reflections and findings from the Development Education Summer School 2012. The toolkit is not a detailed manual that will guide you through a structured process of project design and implementation, but rather a collection of ideas and insights that can be valuable and inspiring for a wider audience – Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) practitioners, educators active in the areas of Environmental Education and Sustainable Development and for anybody else who wants to start exploring these fields. [Read more](#)

Towards a sustainable future for African youth



The Network of African Youths for Development has developed a concept note for a proposed summit next year to 'create a road map for youth-led sustainable development in Africa.'

This initiative has been sparked by the frustrations shown by lack of global leadership following the Cop17 in Durban and Rio+20. [Read more](#)

The metamorphosis of MDGs into SDGs



The starting point of the UN High Level Panel on the post 2015 development agenda will be to examine the shortcomings and inconsistencies of the eight Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000. There may be uncomplicated adjustments required for the first six MDGs, but there will need to be profound changes for the other two: the environmental and economic goals. [Read more](#)

Green Economy Pocketbook



Drawing lessons from the Green Economy Coalition's series of national dialogues in developing and developed countries on the green economy and from across the Coalition's diverse membership, this new pocketbook describes examples, stories and glimpses of a transition that is already underway. [Read more](#)

ICYE PROGRAMME NEWS

ICYE UK charity of the Year.



The [Geographical Association](#) (GA) is a UK based group with a charitable objective of furthering the learning and teaching of geography. It mostly works with professionals and institutions in the educational field. Each year the GA selects a Charity to sponsor for its Annual Conference. The charity is selected by the GA President of that year and ICYE UK was selected for the 2012 Annual Conference with the theme 'Geographies of Difference'. The GA President, Dr Fran Martin chose ICYE UK as the charity because of programme is based on reciprocal exchange and "because of its ethical stance on working in partnership with local communities". [ICYE UK](#) was invited to have a stand at their conference earlier in the year and received a donation from the sale of tickets to the conference of about £500, which was very nice!

„New Forum for a New Era“



These were the words with which the European Education, Training and Youth Forum 2012 on “Investing in skills for growth and jobs” – attended by 350 participants - began on October 18, 2012 in Brussels, Belgium. The new era has been brought upon us by the economic crisis and thus the Europe 2020 strategy aims at supporting employability and linking policy to practice. Secondly, this is a new Forum through the inclusion of a new stakeholder in the Forum: Youth. With the merging of formal and non-formal educational and training programmes under “Erasmus for All” or YES Europe (YES – Youth, Education and Sport) – the name as well as structural and operational aspects of the programme are yet to be finalised – the 2012 Forum for the first time invited ‘youth’ organizations and networks, like the ICYE International Office, to attend, debate and provide input on addressing the challenges to education, training and youth identified in the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs.

In her opening speech, European Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou stated that the current economic crisis is impacting on the population, and an increasingly ageing population places a burden on social services. These challenges can be addressed, she stated, by modernizing education and training. Europe can remain competitive in today’s globalized world and thus the Europe 2020 strategy of growth and jobs urges us towards reforms in education and training. Discussions during the two-day event centred on reforming higher and formal educational systems and institutions, creating synergies between formal and non-formal educational sectors and streamlining and simplifying operational procedures and systems under one all-encompassing programme. Emphasis was therefore on a holistic approach and an integrated programme for young people.

Interestingly, despite the inclusion of “youth” as stakeholders, and the focus on valorizing non-formal education and synergizing formal and non-formal education, the speakers mostly dwelled on the Erasmus programme or presented and discussed projects and models of formal and higher education. The Youth in Action programme, the successful youth mobility and voluntary service programme of the European Commission was only brought into discussions by the European Youth Forum (EYF) and touched upon only peripherally.

In one of the final sessions, the question as to why the funding of student mobility is a far larger component of the new programme compared with the funding of youth mobility unfortunately remained unanswered. The report of the event will be published soon on the [webpage](#) of the European Commission.

Rubaica Jaliwala, Programme Officer,
ICYE International Office

PeaceWorks / ICYE Sweden Volunteer Bus



The brightly painted Volkswagen Volunteer bus is part of Peace Works Peace tour, which in Spring and Summer 2012 visited some high schools for 16-19 year olds in Stockholm and various festivals in Sweden with the aim to encourage young people to talk about peace and volunteering. The interest for the campaign was overwhelming: young people were interested in international volunteer work, but that not so many of them knew it was possible to volunteer through a non-profit peace organization. Interested students, headmasters, student councilors and teachers flocked to the peace bus. During the visits, students could sign up if they were interested to hear more and already after the first two schools more than 100 people has signed up. People could visit the festival tent; get information on volunteering and play with the peace hero quiz with the chance to win great prizes (i.e. a discount on a voluntary exchange). The painted Volkswagen bus became a peace symbol and created a youthful feeling and got everyone thinking about how different life could be in other places, far from everyday life in the school. [Read more.](#)

