Challenges and Opportunities of Youth Information and Counselling in a Digital Era

Seminar

Helsinki, Finland, 19-22 April 2016

Final Report
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Introduction

by Jaana Fedotoff
Development Manager of Koordinaatti, Finland
President of ERYICA

On behalf of Koordinaatti I had the pleasure to welcome around 60 youth information workers from different organisations and countries all over Europe to the seminar Challenges and Opportunities of Youth Information and Counselling in a Digital Era. The seminar took place in Helsinki on 19-21 April 2016.

We spent three days exploring what is happening at the moment in digital youth information work and services and what kind of inspirations and plans we have for the digital youth information services in the future. We explored what kind of digital services young people already have, what they need and what are we able to offer them. And not only offer but create digital services, tools and environments together with young people, so that they are motivated to be involved and have equal opportunities to participate.

When we are talking about digital youth information and counselling services, at the same time we need to discuss what we mean by that. Do we all share common understanding on what is digital? What does it mean in our services, in our daily work and what kind of competences, skills and knowledge we need for that?

Digital is a broad term covering a lot of different aspects. Maybe it means different aspects to each of us? How can we find clear and common understanding on what is quality in digital youth information and counselling services? And do we need to share the same idea on what is digital?

It is also clear that the term is understood differently in different organisations, in different countries and different languages. The seminar we organised in Helsinki with ERYICA and project partners was one forum to discuss and share opinions, ask questions, agree and disagree.

I am sure that through equal dialogue and learning from each other we will create better understanding about what are the challenges and opportunities in a digital era. I am sure we will also find answers and solutions for all these questions together.

All this knowledge and experience that youth information and counselling workers all around Europe have is something we can trust. We can make it possible. Equal
opportunities for young people to access quality youth information and counselling services using also a digital approach to work.
Summary

Objectives and Priorities

For the organisation of the seminar, inspiration was gathered from the conference on “History of Youth Work” that took place in Ghent (Belgium) 1-3 July 2010 and the conference "25 Years of Youth Information - and counting!" organised in Opatija (Croatia) on 16-18 April 2011.

General Objectives
- to discuss and evaluate the development of youth information and counselling in Europe in the last 30 years;
- to identify common and new challenges ahead in its development; and
- to discuss possible solutions and best practices considering the opportunities offered by the digital age.

Specific Objectives
- to understand and assess the needs and challenges faced in the development of youth information in Europe through different stakeholders;
- to enucleate the opportunities for the sector provided by the new digital era;
- to discuss possible developments of youth information in light of best practices and experiences from different countries;
- to spread the enthusiasm of the initiators to those active in youth information today and vice-versa;
- to learn from past and present issues how to overcome new challenges;
- to foster interaction among youth information workers across Europe;
- to promote youth information in countries where these services are not provided;
- to discuss the possible contribution of Youth Information to the Erasmus+ programme;
- to identify synergies with partner organisations such as the European Youth Forum, Eurodesk and the European Youth Card Association; and
- to strengthen partnership and enhance cooperation with the European Commission and with the Council of Europe.
Programme

**Tuesday, 19 April 2016**

- Arrival of participants
- Accommodation @ Sokos Hotelli Presidentti

BYOD – Bring Your Own Device
You will need your own mobile device (i.e. mobile phone, tablet or laptop) during the session.

17:30 **Opening Session** @ Sokos Hotelli Presidentti, Meeting room
- Welcome addresses:
  - Sanja Vuković-Čović, ERYICA President
  - Jaana Fedotoff, Development Manager, Koordinaatti
- Aims of the Seminar and practical information
- Get to know each other

18:30 **Development of youth information and counselling from the 80’s to our days**

19:15 **Informal activities**

20:00 **Dinner** @ Sokos Hotelli Presidentti

**Wednesday, 20 April 2016**

9:00 Meeting at the hotel lobby. Walk to the seminar venue (Kiltasali).

9:30 **Recap of seminar aims and practical information**

9:40-11:15 **Youth Information and Counselling in the Digital Era**
- A historical overview of the work of the Council of Europe youth sector in the field of youth information: André-Jacques Dodin
- Digital Youth Work: Suvi Tuominen, Verke – Development Centre of Digital Youth Work, Finland
- It is enough that the information is accurate and easily accessed – or is it?: Iina Sorvari, International Committee of Youth Co-operation Allianssi, Finland
- European Youth Portal: Graeme Robertson, European Commission, DG Education and Culture
11:15-11:30  Coffee break
11:30-13:00  Discussion of themes from the morning inputs – World Café
13:00-14:00  Lunch @ Kiltasali
14:00-15:30  Young people and digitalisation

- E-participation and the EUth-project: Evaldas Rupkus, IJAB, Germany
- Social empowerment in digital media: Minna Lehtinen, Ehyt ry, Finland
- Developing services for migrant youth in a digital era: challenges and opportunities: Hunderra Assefa, Monik ry, Finland

15:30-16:00  Coffee break
16:00-17:15  Discussion of themes from the afternoon inputs – Gallery Walk
17:15-17:30  Break
17:30-19:00  Offline methods in a digital age: Games
- Joost Capiau, De Aanstokerij, Belgium
20:00  Dinner @ Restaurant Kiila

Thursday, 21 April 2016

8:45  Meeting at the hotel lobby. Walk to the seminar venue (Kiltasali)
9:00-10:00  Good Practice presentations
10:00-12:00  Open Space
11:00-11:30  Coffee break
12:00-13:00  Inspiration for the future: Round table
Conclusions: Eva Reina, ERYICA Director
13:00-14:00  Lunch @ Kiltasali
14:00-15:00  Visit to local Youth Information and Counselling Services
• Ohjaamo Helsinki
• UngInfo / Luckan Integration

15:30 – 17:00  **Networking and development of future strategies and projects**

18:30-23:00  **ERYICA 30th Anniversary** @ Restaurant Uunisaari – together with the ERYICA General Assembly participants and invited guests
• Speech by the President of ERYICA and two former Presidents
• Bernard Awards 2016
• Projection of videos collected about the 30 years of ERYICA
• Digital photo stream of ERYICA
• Dinner & Programme
• Retro party: "Back to 1986"

**Friday, 22 April 2016**

**Departures of the participants**
Discussions and outcomes of the Seminar

In their opening remarks, Ms Sanja Vuković-Čović, the President of ERYICA stressed the importance of Youth Information as a necessity, a right and a basic human need. As being in possession of information, young people became the messengers, the leaders of their community.

Ms Jaana Fedotoff, the Development Manager of Koordinaatti stressed the importance for young people to be in possession of digital skills and competences in order for them to have the means to participate.

What do Digital Competences mean?

- It is a broad concept. Therefore, we need to find common grounds and reach a consensus; the term digital is understood differently depending on the country, the language, etc.
- The overall statement is that digital youth information and counselling provide all young people equal access to youth services. Access is the first step towards empowerment.
- The main change came along with the Internet. With the Internet, the number of young people going to youth centres has decreased a lot, even though the number of youth centres has increased.
- From a European perspective, there was no seminar or training organised as such when it comes to youth information and counselling services. ERYICA was the body that introduced these to youth information centres all over Europe. The youth workers attending the trainings were sharing their knowledge once back home.
- There is not much difference between the questions young people have 30 years ago and the ones young people are facing today. The difference lies on the fact that digitalisation has brought more effectiveness in the overall work performed by the sector. Moreover, it opens doors to greater creativity, greater information outreach in a more inspiring way for young people.
Mr Dodin presented the activities and engagement of the youth sector of the Council of Europe (CoE) in the field of youth information and counselling in a historical perspective. He pointed out that:

- There is no youth policy without youth information;
- Youth Information and Counselling must be managed by people;
- 1997: the partnership of the CoE and ERYICA took the form of guidelines and database setting for youth information and counselling specialists. The CoE sees this partnership as a good channel of communication resulting in a greater outreach of young Europeans.
- The CoE is proud of certain achievements made possible with the assistance of ERYICA, such as the Youth Information Starter Kit, manuals, studies, as well as the contribution to the No Hate Speech Movement. ERYICA actively participated in the creation process of the CoE recommendation on young people’s access to rights.
Digital Youth Work

by Suvi Tuominen, Verke – Development Centre of Digital Youth Work, Finland

Talking of digitalisation in the youth work field in general and the activities of the Development Centre of Digital Youth Work, Ms Tuominen highlighted out that:

- Digitalisation is not a goal in itself, but rather a mean to reach the desired goals. In order to achieve these goals, the idea is to integrate digital media in all aspects of youth work.
- Verke is one of the national development and service centres established by the Ministry of Education and Culture and its vision is to provide everyone who works with young people with the opportunity to use digital media and technology as part of their work. Verke aims to promote welfare, inclusion and equality among young people by means of digital youth work.
- Their main goals are: 1) to provide youth workers with the knowledge to use digital media and technology to increase the quality of youth work; 2) to enable youth work structures to support the use of digital media and technology; 3) to create creative and innovative services in the field of youth work by using digital media and technology.
- The 4 “must have” social media channels for youth workers are: Snapchat, Instagram, Twitch and Youtube.
- Young people are following popular bloggers → We must follow these bloggers to reach young people and enjoy this opportunity to advertise youth information services and values.
It is enough that the information is accurate and easily accessed – or is it?

by Iina Sorvari, International Committee of Youth Co-operation Allianssi, Finland

From the perspective of a youth representative and a young person, Ms Sorvari mentioned that:

- Youth Information is available but its outreach is not perfect, as well as gathering young people’s opinion is difficult. Digital tools represent the solution for a greater outreach.
- The first step is to make young people come to youth information services. How? By making it interactive and fun - not funny.
- Information should not be delivered for the sake of providing information. We have to create information for young people and involve them → Information FOR young people and BY young people.
Mr Robertson presented the concrete plans and developments related to the enhanced version of the European Youth Portal (EYP) that the European Commission intends to launch.

- The first version of the EYP was launched early 2000. In less than a decade, the portal was no longer meeting the needs of young people. 93% of the visits were targeting very few specific topics. ‘We had to add value to the content.’
- The main reasons for the revamp are to make the portal more visible, more accessible and mobile friendly.
- The EYP 2016 – V.3 will be composed by 5 themes: **Inspire; Inform; Support; Engage** and **Reflect**, structured around the following 6 topics: **Volunteering; Study; Work; Train; Be heard; Have fun!**
World Café

The participants of the seminar discussed the plenary inputs from 4 particular points of view, in the form of a World Café. The 4 topics for discussion were:

- Digital media channels: which, how, why?
- How to measure quality?
- What information and skills?
- The involvement of young people in digital media.

Each table tweeted their results and outcomes that include:

- The main point is not which social media should youth workers use but rather who is the messenger. Bloggers are the ones to follow as they count young people among their followers. By using bloggers as a communication channel, we can reach our target group. When these bloggers start to get paid for what they publish, youth information services and centres can start
to advertise their own services more cost effectively, compared to regular media.

- Young people have left Facebook – but a vast majority of youth workers are still there. We must be where young people are, i.e. Snapchat, etc.
- A lot of studies have been run concerning the social media use of young people. The problem is that we know the trend of the past 2 years but it is impossible to predict what will happen next.
- The evolution and changes in the virtual world are so fast that it is very difficult to catch up. Changes are slower within the youth information sector that puts us behind the trend. We must change the communication methods in order to keep the pace.
- Difficult to assess the quality of the communication. We just know whether or not we have reached the target.
- Every country has a different experience of digital youth information. E.g. Finland cooperates with bloggers, the Portuguese partner has 2 workers fully dedicated to digital youth information work in addition to traditional centres, etc.
- Youth information workers in the digital era must have specific skills compared to the youth information workers working in traditional centres. (Photoshop, online language, etc.)
- Youth information workers must change the way they approach young people and build trust through these digital tools.
- Using the right tool is very important – what we use and how we use it.
- ERYICA provides the basic tools and quality guidelines for all youth information services → there is an equal basis within the sector, even though youth information services are different country by country.
- Youth workers are slow in moving from one social media channel to another. They are eager to remain on Facebook and thus remain stuck with past trends.
- We should invest in Peer-to-Peer communication.
- It is important to provide young people with a ‘playground’ containing the means and resources to empower themselves.
- It is important that youth information workers’ goals match young people’s goals. However, it is a process and by the time we are ready to jump in, it might be already time to move on to the next one.
- Youth information workers must give young people the motivation to join in (e.g. young journalists). Once they are motivated, it is not difficult to onboard them because they are digitally literate, skilled and competent.
- Social media tools represent an advertising tool for youth information. Once young people know us, they come for the provided services.
- “Mystery shopping” to assess on the quality of digital tools.
- Young people are our feedback tool.
- Snapchat is good for advertising but not necessarily to deliver content.
- Quality in social media is important too. It requires engagement to assess it.
Young people and digitalisation

E-participation and the EUth project

by Evaldas Rupkus, IJAB, Germany

The EUth project stands for tools and tips for mobile and digital youth participation in and across Europe. It develops and pilots an e-participation platform that allows interactive online decision-making. The project, running under the framework of Horizon 2020, runs between 2015-2018 and involves 11 partners from 8 countries, from the research, software development, public administration and youth work fields. Its aim is to make more young people involved in political decision-making and increase the trust of young people in European political institutions.

The initial version of the platform, presently allowing idea collection, collaborative text work and mobile polling, is available at the URL address opin.me and it will be further enriched in 2017. An open call in 2016 will provide support for 10 pilot projects on the platform.

The presentation of the project is available here.

Social empowerment in digital media

by Minna Lehtinen, Ehyt ry, Finland

Ehyt is the Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention. It operates in all of Finland and promotes healthy ways of life. The organisation, just as Ms Lehtinen, a web-based educator, work for social empowerment. Her presentation paid a special emphasis on the digital tools used in their everyday work. The two main ones are Snapchat and Instagram. Under the name Faktappi, Instagram is the main platform for the organisation where they are building a content library. In addition to these, a chat service is also available for all teenagers in Finland. This is
organised twice a year around a specific theme each time and it combines web based work with the Youth Centre work, in cooperation with several NGOs.

To make social media and digital platforms work, Ms Lehtinen recommends the following tips:

- Be a grown up;
- Be professional;
- Be respectful;
- Be reliable and responsible;
- Be consistent;
- Be yourself;
- Don’t be afraid of being human.

**Developing services for migrant youth in a digital era: Challenges and opportunities**

*by Hunderra Assefa, Monik ry, Finland*

Registered in 2012, the NGO Monik seeks to further the integration of immigrants into the Finnish society and to improve dialogue between various groups and members within the society. Their focus is placed on improving employment, while other activities include information and education, leisure time activities, research and development.

Mr Assefa argued that migrant youth is not a homogenous group but a diverse one that differs in the amount of time spent in country of immigration, the level of education and language proficiency, the cultural and religious background and many others. All such factors must be taken into consideration when planning and designing services for this target group. The three main groups of possible services
are grouped around employment, education and wellbeing. Digital tools can especially be taken advantage of with this target group.

When designing services, the following factors should be considered:

- Define your target group;
- Cultural sensitivity;
- Language barrier;
- Importance of F2F interaction.

Further tips and recommendations are:

- Make sure that there is a need for the service;
- Bring in members of the target group to plan and design;
- Engage migrants as content creators;
- Professionals from amongst the second generation are precious assets when it comes to working with migrant youth;
- Importance of peer support;
- Digitalisation can be an efficient tool, when used correctly.

Participants discussed the above-described presentations in 3 groups, along with the following questions:

**How do you think e-participation and youth information could/can be combined?**

- E-Participation and youth information

In order to take good decisions, you need to be informed. But while passing information to youth (impersonal), it is also important to build relationships with them at the same time (personal).

We want to make the difference between topics that are of interest to youth, and other topics. Both remain equally important, and it cannot be stressed enough that their opinions will be taken into account.

A simple application would be to confront the participant with general information before (being able to) respond(ing) to the questions. This would allow us to create
statistics that are of higher value to decision-makers and would increase chances of implementing.

It would be important, in a trust-building exercise, to communicate results and actions back to the participants in a youth information way.

- There is no digital youth information without e-participation;
- Structured Dialogue;
- By using social media (Skype, MSN), we can have e-participation combined with face-to-face interaction;
- Use the online requests and suggestions of young people to create new contents on a particular subject and share them online (with respect for privacy).

How could a youth information service become a "cat video" of digital media?

- Youth information services could use a project or person who is not directly linked to them and put a topic that lead to importance and usefulness of youth information by using digital media can reach new target groups and raise awareness (e.g. Malala is giving a statement on importance of education for young people, particularly girls...).

- We could do it a different way:
  o Shoot “cat video”;
  o Before publishing it, shoot a few more short videos (e.g. how to open an email account, how to write a CV and cover letter, where to find job opportunities...);
  o If many young people will come and ask for more assistance, we can organise it in groups;
After providing service to the first 50 young people, we can go to the EUres adviser and give them all tools we created and ask them to continue.

- Maybe it shouldn’t...

### How could Youth Information Services support migrant youth to benefit existing online youth information services?

- **First:** Talk to them - get to know their needs;
- **Second:** Ask existing online youth information services that are working with them, what are their needs;
- **Third:** Research what online communities migrants are using (forums, Facebook groups, etc.);
- **Fourth:** Support the active citizenship. Inform/ offer specific group debates. Provide specialised information for different groups. Migrant is a broad term that can be split into different groups: how long they are here? Where are they from? Why have they left their homeland?
- **Fifth:** Reach those who have not enough resources: where are they? How are you going to reach them? Get to know who they are connecting with. Collaborate with existing online youth info services;
- **Sixth:** For young migrants the local policy and law is too hard to understand. Make sure they have an opportunity to read it rewritten in “easy language” (simple, basic words and key points). Infotainment is a good tool.

### CONCLUSION:

1. Come up with possible networks
2. Research existing materials
3. Create new materials
4. Look for additional support

- **Welcome to... app:** a YOMIM application update with Google translate function
- **Co-operate with telecom companies** so everybody could connect even if they don’t have a subscription with the telecom company
- **Target Groups -> Migrants -> Needs -> Skills, Knowledge -> How they can use it here.** We have to build up trust with the focus group through activities.
• To create awareness about existing services
• **Accessibility:**
  o language
  o technology
  o get familiar with concepts
  o know-how
  o offline, F2F

• **Start a relationship:** find how you can be meaningful for them;
• **Work with an organisation** that already has contact with them;
• **Engage them:** much like any other youth, get them involved, with their interests;
• **Ask them to help to reach other migrant youth,** to know their needs, to provide answers, to communicate it...
• **Check Mvsliim.com:** Two young Belgian Muslims started an international platform with a huge success. At least one of them was involved in a youth information/young journalist organisation in Flanders, so, objective achieved!

The outcomes of the discussions were presented in a gallery walk.
Offline Methods in a Digital Age: Games

by Joost Capiau, De Aanstokerij, Belgium

Mr Capiau started his session mentioning that using games is an opportunity to inform young people and influence their behaviour; games are a universal language that everyone can understand.

De Aanstokerij develops, produces, facilitates and distributes games as an educational tool. They strongly believe that games are a good tool to inform and sensitize children, youngsters and adults about different social issues such as democracy, intercultural learning, north-south issues, the environment, social skills and many more. Information acquired through educational games is better assimilated, understood and remembered, as it is experience-based, as well as fun.

The organisation has an online shop where the games can be bought (some of them in English and French as well) and they are open for proposals from interested partners to translate more games.

Promising results of cMOOCs – A Digital Approach on Youth Work

by Päivi Timonen, Senior Lecturer and Online Learning Specialist, HUMAK, Finland

Ms Timonen started with giving an overview of the education system in Finland. The cMOOC project ‘Digital Perspective on Youth Work’ created the courses. The letter ‘c’ stands for constructive or collaborative, and the courses aim to provide information, raise knowledge, gain skills, study in groups, coach, online learning, peer evaluation etc. The courses use the Moodlerooms layout.

“Digital youth work means using digital media and technology for youth work. In the context of youth work, digitality should be understood not only as a media but also a content, culture and operating environment.”

Her presentation can be consulted here.
Conclusions

by Eva Reina, ERYICA Director

Historical evolution
- Historical overview from different angles: practical-political, European-national-local levels;
- Interesting discussions on how the sector has evolved in the past 30 years and how it has adapted to new challenges and realities;
- Importance over the years of working in a network to learn from each other and to support each other. This is ERYICA’s added value over the last 30 years and we still bring.

Digital era
- Has brought new information tools and channels to make communication with young people more effective, but the essential needs of young people remain very similar over decades;
- Online forms of information and communication tools need to be embedded in the provision of Youth Information and Counselling services, but offline forms of communication and face-to-face interactions cannot be totally replaced by digital environments, they are complementary and cannot be dissociated;
- Digital youth work / youth information work should not be an aim in itself, but a medium to reach our goals.

Examples and good practice presented during the seminar
- Digital youth work;
- MOOCs;
- E-participation tools (OPIN);
- European Youth Portal;
- Online magazine written by young people (Sprouts);
- Offline methods: games and helpline;
- Social empowerment: promotion healthy lifestyles;
- Supporting young people with migrant background.

European youth policy
- Council of Europe
ERYICA and the Council of Europe have very successful and well-founded cooperation since 1997. During this time, the Council of Europe has constantly proven its commitment to support youth information and counselling in Europe. Mr Dodin’s quote summarises this commitment: “There is no youth policy without youth information”.

In the framework of our partnership numerous tools, manuals, events and resources have been developed according to the needs of the sector and the main priorities of the Council of Europe in the field of youth. In 2016 the
focus has been put on a project aiming to define and enhance the role of youth information and counselling in the prevention of youth violent extremism and radicalisation.

- **European Commission**
ERYICA has also a very long-standing cooperation with the European Commission. The network has the expertise and the willingness to support the European Commission in enriching the European Youth Portal and in making it more resourceful for young people.

**Concluding remarks**

- The **ERYICA Board** and the **Secretariat** are fully committed to help ERYICA members in addressing their needs through projects, activities, tools and resources like Sheryica, advocacy, and policy support;
- ERYICA is proud of having been a platform for exchange and mutual growth in the past 30 years with our slogan in mind “All about Youth”;
- **New projects** and activities are coming up following the needs and demands of our members:
  - EUth project: OPIN open call;
  - DOYIT: Development of online youth information trainings;
  - Marketing and promotion of youth information and youth work (with EYCA);
  - Project with the CoE on prevention of youth violent extremism;
  - New edition of the good practice booklet this year;
  - Etc.
## List of Participants

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>E-Mail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lorena Bushi</td>
<td>Youth Act Center</td>
<td>ALBANIA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:operations@youthact.al">operations@youthact.al</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleksandar Prvulovic</td>
<td>Jugendinfo</td>
<td>AUSTRIA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:aleksandar.prvulovic@jugendinfo.at">aleksandar.prvulovic@jugendinfo.at</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joost Capiau</td>
<td>De Aanstokerij</td>
<td>BELGIUM</td>
<td><a href="mailto:joost@aanstokerij.be">joost@aanstokerij.be</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy Demeulenaere</td>
<td>De Ambrassade</td>
<td>BELGIUM</td>
<td><a href="mailto:andy.demeulenaere@iminds.be">andy.demeulenaere@iminds.be</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elise Gozin</td>
<td>De Ambrassade</td>
<td>BELGIUM</td>
<td><a href="mailto:elise.gozin@cawantwerpen.be">elise.gozin@cawantwerpen.be</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofie Iserby</td>
<td>De Ambrassade</td>
<td>BELGIUM</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sofie.iserby@ambrassade.be">sofie.iserby@ambrassade.be</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graeme Robertson</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
<td>BELGIUM</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Graeme.robertson@ec.europa.eu">Graeme.robertson@ec.europa.eu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manel Sanchez Garcia</td>
<td>EYCA</td>
<td>BELGIUM</td>
<td><a href="mailto:manel.sanchez@eyca.org">manel.sanchez@eyca.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara Liebertz</td>
<td>Infotreff</td>
<td>BELGIUM</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lara.liebertz@jugendinfo.be">lara.liebertz@jugendinfo.be</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Joos Callens</td>
<td>Mediaraven</td>
<td>BELGIUM</td>
<td><a href="mailto:joos.callens@mediaraven.be">joos.callens@mediaraven.be</a></td>
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<td>Igor Kovač</td>
<td>Zajednica ICM u Hrvatskoj</td>
<td>CROATIA</td>
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<td>Darko Čop</td>
<td>Zajednica ICM u Hrvatskoj</td>
<td>CROATIA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:darko@infozona.hr">darko@infozona.hr</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sanja Vuković-Čović</td>
<td>Zajednica ICM u Hrvatskoj</td>
<td>CROATIA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sanjav_c@yahoo.com">sanjav_c@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiri Gurecky</td>
<td>NUV - National Institute for Education/EYCA</td>
<td>CZECH REPUBLIC</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jiri.gurecky@crdm.cz">jiri.gurecky@crdm.cz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mari Oad</td>
<td>ENTK</td>
<td>ESTONIA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mari.naudi@entk.ee">mari.naudi@entk.ee</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Juurmaa</td>
<td>ENTK</td>
<td>ESTONIA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:maria.juurmaa@entk.ee">maria.juurmaa@entk.ee</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelin Koppel</td>
<td>Archimedes</td>
<td>ESTONIA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:evelin.koppel@archimedes.ee">evelin.koppel@archimedes.ee</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heidi Leppäkari</td>
<td>Koordinaatti</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:heidi.leppakari@ouka.fi">heidi.leppakari@ouka.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heta Malinen</td>
<td>Kuopion kaupunki</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:heta.malinen@kuopio.fi">heta.malinen@kuopio.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaana Fedotoff</td>
<td>Koordinaatti</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jaana.fedotoff@ouka.fi">jaana.fedotoff@ouka.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marko Kilpeläinen</td>
<td>Keski-Suomen ELY-keskus</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:marko.kilpelainen@ely-keskus.fi">marko.kilpelainen@ely-keskus.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merja-Maarja Oinas</td>
<td>Koordinaatti</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:merja-maarja.oinas@ouka.fi">merja-maarja.oinas@ouka.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne-Mari Ikola</td>
<td>Vaasan kaupunki</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mervi.ahola@vaasa.fi">mervi.ahola@vaasa.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mika Pietilä</td>
<td>Koordinaatti</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mika.pietila@ouka.fi">mika.pietila@ouka.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pirjo Kovalainen</td>
<td>Oulun kaupunki</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pirjo.kovalainen@ouka.fi">pirjo.kovalainen@ouka.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saija Ukkola</td>
<td>Oulun kapunki</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:saija.ukkola@ouka.fi">saija.ukkola@ouka.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suvi Aitto-oja</td>
<td>Koordinaatti</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:suvi-aitto-oja@ouka.fi">suvi-aitto-oja@ouka.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pia Lundbom</td>
<td>HUMAK University Applied Sciences</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pia.lundbom@humak.fi">pia.lundbom@humak.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Päivi Timonen</td>
<td>HUMAK University Applied Sciences</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:paivi.timonen@humak.fi">paivi.timonen@humak.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiina Haapalainen</td>
<td>Vantaan kaupunki</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tiina.haapalainen@vantaa.fi">tiina.haapalainen@vantaa.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iina Sorvari</td>
<td>Allianssi / Invited speaker</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sorvari.iina@gmail.com">sorvari.iina@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suvi Tuominen</td>
<td>Verke / Invited speaker</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:suvi.tuominen@verke.org">suvi.tuominen@verke.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minna Lehtinen</td>
<td>Ehyt ry / Invited speaker</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:minna.lehtinen@ehyt.fi">minna.lehtinen@ehyt.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunderra Assefa</td>
<td>Monik ry / Invited speaker</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hunderra.assefa@moni.fi">hunderra.assefa@moni.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terhi Hunnakko</td>
<td>Seinäjoen kaupunki</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:terhi.hunnakko@seinajoki.fi">terhi.hunnakko@seinajoki.fi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>André-Jacques Dodin</td>
<td>Council of Europe</td>
<td>FRANCE</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ajdodin@outlook.fr">ajdodin@outlook.fr</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaldas Rupkus</td>
<td>IJAB</td>
<td>GERMANY</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rupkus@ijab.de">rupkus@ijab.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernard Hackett</td>
<td>Youth Work Ireland</td>
<td>IRELAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Bernardjhackett@gmail.com">Bernardjhackett@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Geraldine Lacey</td>
<td>Youth Work Ireland</td>
<td>IRELAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:glacey@youthworkmidlands.org">glacey@youthworkmidlands.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia Flynn</td>
<td>Youth Work Ireland</td>
<td>IRELAND</td>
<td><a href="mailto:youthinformation@clareyouthservicen.org">youthinformation@clareyouthservicen.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnė Graikšaitė</td>
<td>LiJOT</td>
<td>LITHUANIA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:agne@eurodesk.lt">agne@eurodesk.lt</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beatrice Umbrasaitė</td>
<td>LiJOT</td>
<td>LITHUANIA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:beatrice@eurodesk.lt">beatrice@eurodesk.lt</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvija Telksnyte</td>
<td>LiJOT</td>
<td>LITHUANIA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:silvija.telksnyte@gmail.com">silvija.telksnyte@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean-Claude Bisenius</td>
<td>Centre Information Jeunes</td>
<td>LUXEMBOURG</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bisi@ci.lu">bisi@ci.lu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva Reina</td>
<td>ERYICA</td>
<td>LUXEMBOURG</td>
<td><a href="mailto:eva.reina@eryica.org">eva.reina@eryica.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imre Simon</td>
<td>ERYICA</td>
<td>LUXEMBOURG</td>
<td><a href="mailto:imre.simon@eryica.org">imre.simon@eryica.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malu Mukendi</td>
<td>ERYICA</td>
<td>LUXEMBOURG</td>
<td><a href="mailto:malu.mukendi@eryica.org">malu.mukendi@eryica.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noel Zammit Pawley</td>
<td>Agenzija Żgħażagħ</td>
<td>MALTA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:noel.zammit-pawley@gov.mt">noel.zammit-pawley@gov.mt</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Célia Bernardo</td>
<td>IPDJ</td>
<td>PORTUGAL</td>
<td><a href="mailto:celia.bernardo@ipdj.pt">celia.bernardo@ipdj.pt</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cláudia Reis Leitão</td>
<td>IPDJ</td>
<td>PORTUGAL</td>
<td><a href="mailto:claudia.reis@ipdj.pt">claudia.reis@ipdj.pt</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Ferreira</td>
<td>IPDJ</td>
<td>PORTUGAL</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jose.ferreira@ipdj.pt">jose.ferreira@ipdj.pt</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andreja Erman</td>
<td>Zavod MISSS</td>
<td>SLOVENIA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:andreja.erman@gmail.com">andreja.erman@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matjaž Medvešek</td>
<td>Zavod MISSS</td>
<td>SLOVENIA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:matjaz@misss.org">matjaz@misss.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miša Hrib</td>
<td>Zavod MISSS</td>
<td>SLOVENIA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hrib.misa@gmail.com">hrib.misa@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josep Moline</td>
<td>Catalan Youth Agency</td>
<td>SPAIN</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jmoline@gencat.cat">jmoline@gencat.cat</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marta Vilalta</td>
<td>Catalan Youth Agency</td>
<td>SPAIN</td>
<td><a href="mailto:marta.vilalta@gencat.cat">marta.vilalta@gencat.cat</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik Thelander</td>
<td>Solna UngInfo</td>
<td>SWEDEN</td>
<td><a href="mailto:fredrik.thelander@fritidsforum.se">fredrik.thelander@fritidsforum.se</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepe Herrera</td>
<td>Solna UngInfo</td>
<td>SWEDEN</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pepe.herrera@solna.se">pepe.herrera@solna.se</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arielle Tye</td>
<td>ProMo-Cymru</td>
<td>UNITED KINGDOM</td>
<td><a href="mailto:arielle@promo-cymru.org">arielle@promo-cymru.org</a></td>
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<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helen Jones</td>
<td>CWVYS</td>
<td>UNITED KINGDOM</td>
<td><a href="mailto:admin@cwvys.org.uk">admin@cwvys.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marco Gil-Cervantes</td>
<td>ProMo-Cymru</td>
<td>UNITED KINGDOM</td>
<td><a href="mailto:marco@promo-cymru.org">marco@promo-cymru.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam Easterbrook</td>
<td>ProMo-Cymru</td>
<td>UNITED KINGDOM</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sam@thesprout.co.uk">sam@thesprout.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>