

EUROPEAN YOUNG PEOPLE AND LOCAL CITIZENSHIP FEASIBILITY VISIT REPORT

The feasibility visit called “Young Europeans and Local Citizenship” took place in Brest from Friday the 23rd to Sunday the 25th of September 2005. Along with France, being represented by Brest, 5 European countries also took part in the meeting : Luxembourg, Germany, Italy, Bulgaria and Estonia.

We have since met the Romanian representatives of the town of Constantza, who are very interested by the results of the visit and by the continuation of the project.

The feasibility visit had for goal to allow the European partners to assess the possibilities of a youth exchange and meeting project on the theme of youth participation to the local life.

The exchanges have been run by the young of the local youth council of Brest, by the coordinator of this organization, but also by the representatives of the other countries.

1- VISIT COURSE AND RESULTS.

→ FRIDAY

On Friday afternoon, the European partners have, one after another, portrayed their town, their organization (youth councils, associations...) and its activities, its public... In that order, they used tools lent by the town of Brest : laptops, video projector... The use of these tools made the presentation more dynamic.

After each presentation, there has been exchanges about the portrayal of the town and organization as well as the question of the youth participation to the local life.

That way, we learnt that the town of Tortona in Italy just created a local youth council, that the town of Kiel in Germany offered youth fora (talks between the youth and the elected) and was thinking about starting a local youth council, that Luxembourg town had also organized youth fora, that the Euro Bridge association from Tallin was very committed to actions in the youth program and was interested in the European participation of the youngsters, and finally that Selvievo in Bulgaria (a town near Ihtiman, who was at the meeting) had a local youth council very interested in the participation of the young people to the local life.

After the presentations, we had planned to start a general exchange about a project that may be started on the question of the participation of the young people to the local life. We asked the participants to suggest a working method.

At first, the group decided to define the main problematic of the project. Each participant was asked to find words and expressions that seemed important and topic related to them.

There are the words listed : young people / citizenship : voting / people being listened / active position / exchange : how and often ? / impact of local society / space to express idea / free mind / to share culture, ideas, arts / opening mind / cooperation / interaction / improve image of institutions for young people / trust in institutions and political life / information / interaction with local youngster.

Further to that work, the participants retained the words and expression corresponding best to their wishes toward the project topics. Talks about these words and expression allowed us to define the problematic :

«How to improve interactions between young people and institutions for a better impact on local society ?»

→ **SATURDAY**

On Saturday morning, we discussed with the deputy mayor of Brest on charge of the youth, on the subject of local citizen commitment of the young people.

The participants were able to describe the different ways in which the young people could commit to their town. The discussion highlighted differences, but also ignited the curiosity of some each other on what each town could offer to the young people on that topic. The group's conclusion was that an exchange would allow the young people to get inspired on the various actions, but also to stand back on their practices.

After that, it was about time, we suggested to the group to take a tour of the town of Brest.

Thus, we went downtown, where we had a get-together organized by the town hall, and where we were able to introduce the European partners to some elected Brest representatives, and international exchanges associations, and to whom we also explained our project.

We had lunch in a hall of residence for young workers. The participants were able to learn the functioning of that association.

A nice walk to the Saint Michel Fair (Brest's annual jumble sale) for the digestion, and we were back to the youth hostel.

A foretaste of the preparation visit :

At first, as a big group, we exchanged on the feasible activities, the exchanges supports, as part of a stay about the defined problematic.

Some activities that are offered are :

- Theatre
- Video
- Roleplaying
- Communication towards the young people and the institutions.

On the basis of the offered activities, the participants gathered in groups of 3. In each small group, there were 3 European partners from different countries, with each time a member of the local youth council of Brest.

The participants decided that each group should suggest activities on each workshop. After an hour of thinking, each group presented their ideas. There is a summary of the retained suggestions :

- **Theatre** : scene writing on the way to meet institutions. The young people could start from their actual view on the institutions, to then define what are according to them, the do's and don't's in order to improve the situation by a better approach of the meeting.

- **Roleplaying** : Roleplaying of young people who could like to ask the institutions for the set up of a permanent structure (association, youth council...) or of a more ad hoc basis (Youth fora...) on local life participation for the young people. The participants could picture the different meetings with the institutions, find the arguments, the problems and the way they could solve the difficulties.

- **Video** : mixing fiction and reality by asking the young people to film at first out-of-phase scenes of life moments in a local youth council as well as real situations scenes. The aim is then to offer to people met on the street to watch an out-of-phase scene and to ask them their view on the project of starting a participation structure for the young people. After that they should show them the real life videos and to see what the new reactions are.

- **Communication** : making posters in order to make the young people aware of the importance of citizen participation. Also making posters to make institutions conscious of the importance of listening and talking to the young people.

→ **Method**

The partners think it important to mix the young people from different countries in each workshop. We also think that, from the start, young people could introduce themselves to the others by using the theme of the workshop they chose (e.g. drawings, improvisations...). The present partners also suggest to call for local young artists to help putting up the workshops (actors, graphists...). The idea being to also communicate on the possibilities the European youth program can offer.

↳ **Final objective of the workshop**

At the end of stay, showing the results of the different workshops to the representatives and to the young people from Brest, in order to ignite the debate between the young people and the institutions, so as to define together which improvements we could give to the current situation. It would be interesting to set a charter of participation of the young people to the life of their town, which would specify the role and responsibility of the young people and the representatives.

Saturday evening ended by a Breton gastronomic meal : kig-ha-farz (of which, we won't give out the recipe today !), and followed by a walk in town.

The great harmony between the different participants while working as well as while relaxing seemed to stimulate each even more at the idea of an exchange project.

On Sunday, after a difficult wakening, we went back on Saturday's discussions and we talked about the time and place of the meeting project.

2- PROJECT VOTED BY THE PARTICIPANS.

- A preparatory meeting in June 2006 in Brest.
- A meeting project in Brest on July 2006.
- The possibility of hosting each participant at the youth hostel.

3- ASSESSMENT OF THE FEASABILITY VISIT.

The participants have wanted to assess the feasibility visit together. We can retain the following :

- The exchange timings and the way they were done were greatly appreciated by each because everyone could get involved in the meeting. Even though, it is sometimes difficult to keep focused all weekend long. We have had the opportunity to see the importance of keeping up with the schedule.
- We got the awaited results. The participants agreed on the principle of a project, its theme and the workable activities.
- The premises of youth hostel are comfortable and practical, and the local environment (beach, marina...) is nice and particularly convenient to welcome group of young people.
- The workshops and the program need to be deepened during the preparatory visit session.

4- CALENDAR.

- A report will be sent soon to the participants.
- Each of them will have to show the results of the visit to their organization and to the young people.
- The different partners will have to find a group of young people interested in participating and will have to send back the part III.
- Brest will lay its project on February.
- June 2006 : preparatory visit in Brest.
- July 2006 : youth exchange in Brest.