



COLLECTION OF INTERVIEWS WITH TRAINERS IN THE YOUTH FIELD

MEET YOUR TRAINER

The project “Meet your Trainer” was created for young people who would like to become trainers in non-formal educational field. It was developed by YEE team after the successful experience of co-organising the training course “Environmental Training of Eco-Trainers” (March 2014, Germany). After this project it was clear that there are many young people who are interested in the non-formal educational field or are already starting to work as trainers.

With this project we would like to support young people who want to become eco-trainers by providing space for sharing experience and knowledge.

Throughout November 2016 - January 2017 we collected and published interviews with experienced trainers. They told us more about their experiences and gave some tips to young people who are beginning their career paths as trainers.

You can find the interviews in the pages to follow. We hope you will find some inspiration from their stories.

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ILZE JĒČE

Trainer

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Education: Law degree, holistic bodyworker

Fields/topics you work in: Personal development, conflict and communication, embodied learning, environmental protection and ecology

Experience as a trainer: Great amount of various training courses in Latvia and across Europe. Have also worked continuously in collaboration with organizations like British Council, homo ecos:, IYNF, Room of Fulfilled Dreams



WHY DID YOU BECOME A TRAINER?

I became a trainer because I saw education as a great tool to expose people to different views and experiences, especially concerning green living and ecological thinking. After having done my EVS in 2004, I started to work for National Agency's pool of trainers, leading EVS orientation trainings. However my first training jobs on international level started on 2005 in cooperation with Cooperation and Development Network Eastern Europe.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT BEING A TRAINER?

Seeing the transformation of attitudes and actions of participants, essentially because of the experience created in the training course. It is also incredibly gratifying to receive letters years after the training, reading about the impact that the course has created for the lives of many.

I also just love to present and run sessions on my favourite subjects, because I truly trust that this knowledge will benefit others, and also because I keep learning from different perspectives and opinions myself.

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY TRAINER?

Yes, certainly. One of the main reasons, I started to work for IYNF, was a strong call to create and promote guidelines for sustainable projects and organisational

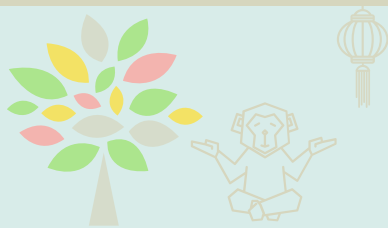
management. Thus we created Green Toolbox. During all my training career since 2004 up until now, I have been actively engaged in discussion and practice of creating more sustainable learning spaces, in terms of venues chosen, materials bought, food eaten etc. It is completely essential for me to work with integrity, to know that with my work we contribute to solutions, rather than create more problems.

HOW DID YOU BECOME A TRAINER? WHAT DID YOU DO TO START WORKING AS A TRAINER?

Back in 2004. I had been working for various NGO's since 1999 and had already attained experience running initiatives and working with young people. In 2004, I ran my first work camp and since then was very confident that I can create a holistic learning spaces. Certainly, when I started training there were no computers or fancy materials, thus my work has changed a lot.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF BEING A TRAINER?

Just like in any relationship- synergy and common rhythm is important. Thus if the rhythm is off and synergy is missing within the group, it may be challenging to relate to the group and adjust facilitation style. It is also challenging to deal with the fact that many people come to Erasmus programmes out of wish to travel for free and are unmotivated to fully participate and



do work for a better world. Thus I wish that more participants would understand that it is an immense privilege to participate in such a programme and would feel obliged to pass their knowledge forward to communities back home.

DO YOU HAVE SOME TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BECOME TRAINERS?

I'd suggest gaining as much experience working for various NGO's as possible. The trainer's job might sound just amazing; you stand there in front of people, make jokes and say something wise and intelligent. But in fact, it is a very complicated process, all the way from designing inclusive learning process to holding a group and individuals in complex situations. Thus gaining as much experience working with people, working in groups and organizations is obligatory pre-requisite to become a good trainer.

WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEBODY TOLD YOU WHEN YOU WERE STARTING AS A TRAINER?

I'd wish that I could shadow someone and learn from the ways they hold groups and processes. When I started, I did something that was very intuitive and made sense for me, but was not really given much opportunity to learn side by side with very experienced trainers.



It is also very essential to get supervision from experienced group facilitator, therapist or any other person knowing psychology of people and groups. I would have definitely progressed more quickly in my path as a trainer, if I would have had a chance to express my ups and downs in facilitation work and had got mentoring.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU IN YOUR WORK AS A TRAINER?

Working together with amazing colleagues, which give inspiring input and serve as motivators for my own work. It uplifts me also when I read that participants have changed their daily habits, become vegetarians or started some community actions etc.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR FACILITATING A TRAINING COURSE?

Through the years, I have compiled quite many materials, so often I look for methods and approaches in my old reports. But I constantly educate myself in order to be updated with topics, so that I can better inform and inspire participants.

HOW DO YOU PROMOTE YOURSELF AS A TRAINER?

That's an interesting question. I had never thought about promoting myself since most of the work proposals came from the people that know me or have heard of my work. As well as I never thought of a trainer's work as a career, but rather as a tool to create a social change.

But in the past two years, slowly switching to non NGO work, I have been more actively establishing my webpage www.ecobodywork.com and updating my Salto trainer's profile. But in reality it is almost always that I get job proposals through people that know me or that know people that know me. Still, I think that the work that is done and the recommendations from participants are the best ways to ensure that "your brand" is strong and people- interested to employ you.

ILONA OLEHLOVÁ

Trainer



Country: Czech Republic/ Republic of Macedonia

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Education: Master in Political Science, Bachelor in Media Science and Journalism

Fields/topics you work in: Creativity (creative writing), media, communication, campaigning, intercultural learning, human rights, peace education and conflict management

Experience as a trainer: Please check out my SALTO profile (<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toy/ilona-olehlova.2245/>)

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TRAINER?

I had the opportunity to be an EVS (European Voluntary Service) volunteer in Skopje, Macedonia for one year. During my EVS time, my perception on my future job changed and I realised that I would like to continue to be active in the field of non-formal education. At the same period, I had the opportunity to get involved in several trainings so I grabbed the opportunity and step by step became a trainer.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT BEING A TRAINER?

I would say the fact that the job is never the same. Even if you work on the same topic the group will make it again new and unique.

Also, in this period of my life I am enjoying to be a freelancer and being a trainer fits to my current lifestyle perfectly.

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY TRAINER?

I try to be environmentally-friendly. Sometimes it is easier because the environment

of the training itself is environmentally friendly, sometimes it is really challenging because I work in an environment where ecological awareness is not very high and you simply do not have an opportunity to recycle or use recycled materials.

In any case, I always try to use minimum materials, if possible. I try to recycle and do not waste any resources. In the future, I would like to also fly less and travel more by trains because I need to admit that I am flying quite often and it is not really environmentally-friendly.

DO YOU HAVE SOME TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BECOME TRAINERS?

Try it out. Many times, we are afraid to try new things. Maybe, we do not believe in our own competencies or we are afraid of the reactions but in way to become a trainer you need to try it out and see if it is something that you could enjoy doing.

Never stop learning and working on yourself. When I look back on my trainers' beginning I was a completely different trainer. I had a different attitude. I worked on different topics. I think, as a trainer, it is important to keep challenging yourself and keep learning new methods, tools, techniques that you can after share with the group.



WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEBODY TOLD YOU WHEN YOU WERE STARTING AS A TRAINER?

What worked once does not need to work for second time.

Once you became a trainer I think you quickly realize that the wonderful activity that the participants found interesting at one training can become very quickly a 'nightmare' activity in case of the other one. Each group has own dynamics, specifics and I think it is important that you have always few plans in your head. So in case that plan A does not work you can use plan B or C.

You do not know everything and it is totally OK to admit it.

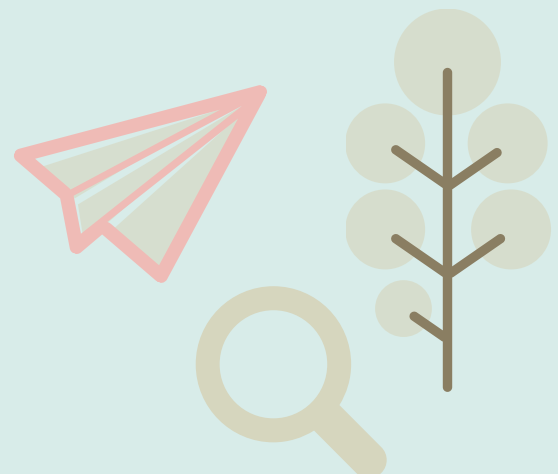
I do not have answers on every question that the participants ask me and I learn that the best way how to deal with this fact is to admit and try to find an answer together with them.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR FACILITATING A TRAINING COURSE?

I am looking everywhere. I have my training 'diary' with notes on activities, methods that I experienced by myself as a participant or I already used at some training. It helps me in the situation when I need to get some new idea quickly. After I am taking part in online courses connected with the topics that are interesting to me and I am always saving and downloading everything what I think can be used later – interesting TED talk video, examples of some campaigns, articles tackling the issue on which I am working.



In case of preparation I would like to point out that a training course is not an individual job. Often you work together with a team. It means that during the preparation you work with other trainers and it is important to make sure that contributions of each member of the team will fit together as puzzle.



RICHARD IRVINE

Trainer



Country: UK (but I feel European!)

Contact information: www.richardirvine.co.uk
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Education: I qualified as a secondary school geography teacher and taught in school for 5 years.

Fields/topics you work in: Forest Education, Environmental Education, Outdoor Experiential Education.

Experience as a trainer:

YEE! 'Forest Welcome Home' project. Poland 2011

YEE! 'Environmental Education for Sustainability' project. Serbia 2014

I have delivered the level 3 Certificate in Forest School Programme Leadership in the UK since 2012

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TRAINER?

After nearly 20 years of working in formal and non-formal education, I had been thinking about doing more work with adults and other professionals in the field but my first training course came about by accident through YEE! In 2011 – the international year of the Forest, I heard about a training course in the Bieszczady Mountains in Poland and applied to a UK YEE partner organisation to attend as a participant. When it turned out that I was no longer youthful enough to qualify for funding, I offered my services as a course trainer. The organisers liked my offer and I was co-trainer for a week with Rysek from Poland.

In my day to day work in the UK, I run an accredited course for teachers, early educators and youth workers in Forest Education. I had been running Forest School and other outdoor education programmes for many years myself and felt that I had the experience, skills and knowledge to help other professionals in their own learning and development.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT BEING A TRAINER?

I like the variety that training brings to my working life. Every course is different because of the mix of participants and the

backgrounds they bring to the course, the setting, the weather etc. I enjoy the challenge of adapting the Forest School Training course to the needs and strengths of the individuals in the group. As well as being the course facilitator and sometimes teacher, I am always a co-participant and I love it when a community for learning develops over the time we are together.

When I am working in a new place, for example on the banks of the river Danube in Serbia, often there is very little time to get to know the locality and it is necessary to really think creatively how to best use the sites available to give the participants the richest possible experience. Working with other trainers really enhances this and I have been lucky to work with some inspiring professionals from other countries as part of my work.

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY TRAINER?

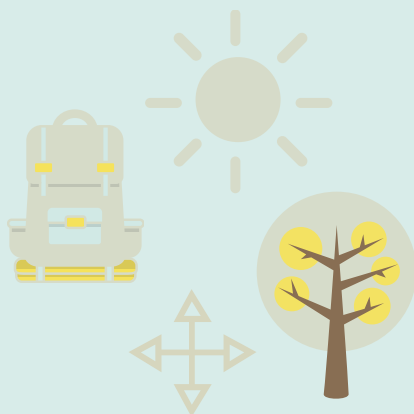
The short answer is, yes, of course. Education **in**, **about** and **for** the environment has been my main aim since I started working in Education in the early 1990s. In terms of Forest Education, I think that educators need to be very mindful of the impact of their activity on the ecosystem in which they are working.



I train participants in my courses to undertake surveys and ecological impact assessments on which they then base their management plan for the site where they run long term programmes. I think that as well as reducing our negative impact, we should aim to enhance the woodland we work in through management work to improve habitats for biodiversity. This can include tree felling and coppicing as well as tree planting, depending on the needs of the site.

I try and model sustainable behaviours on courses and use a lot of old tools which have been repaired and recycled rather than focusing on having the latest, shiny, new equipment. I use natural renewable resources from the forest where possible and promote the teaching of practical ways to engage people with sustainable management of woodlands.

In my work with children and young people, I still cling to the hope that by having direct, positive experiences of wild and natural places, they will develop bonds with those places and care for them and the wider world around them.



DO YOU HAVE SOME TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BECOME TRAINERS?

The main thing I would recommend is to gain experience in the area in which you want to train. I see training and teaching not as a science but as a craft in which you need to serve a long apprenticeship. The apprenticeship is having diverse life experiences and reflecting on them. Attend training courses and try and figure out why the trainers are doing certain things in certain ways. Shadow a trainer you respect or help out with the logistics on a course and attend the planning meetings to get an insight into how trainers construct a learning experience.

If you wish to be a trainer in environmental education for example, then get involved with running lots of programmes with lots of different sorts of groups in lots of different environments. When you can do your work instinctively and perhaps others in your field come to you for advice, then you might be ready to think about becoming a trainer.



WHAT MOTIVATES YOU IN YOUR WORK AS A TRAINER?

I love learning new things and I love meeting and spending time with others who are curious about the world and new ideas. I am a student and an educator and I want to help others feel that joy of learning that I know.

I am strongly influenced by the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey and one of my favorite quotations of his is "the most important attitude that can be formed is that of the desire to go on learning"...

...that, and the simple desire to live in a better world than the one we have made so far!

HOW DO YOU PROMOTE YOURSELF AS A TRAINER?

I would say that I have a lot to learn about marketing. Self promotion does not come easily to many who have worked in education and whose intrinsic motivation to 'make a difference' means that they are modest about what they do. Unfortunately we have to operate within the neo-liberal system that we aim to change and to some extent have to 'compete' with other trainers in an increasingly fragmented and individualistic world.

Every trainer has their own personal approach and 'angle' on their work. I think that it is important to communicate that clearly to participants and organizations that you work with so that they can find the most appropriate training approach for themselves.



I made a conscious decision not to brand myself with any of the key words like 'Wild', 'Wood', 'Adventure' etc and stick to using my own name for my website and leaflets etc. There is no pretense of a corporate 'we'; it is just me and the experience that I bring to the course.

I also have decided not to compete with other trainers by offering quick or cheap courses. I am not trying to expand my business, capture market share or get rich but I am going to focus on offering the best quality training that I can. Recently this meant extending my Forest School training course from 8 to 10 days whilst keeping the price the same. I wrote a blog about that here:

<http://richardirvine.co.uk/2016/06/forest-school-training-caveat-emptor/>.

CARMINE RODI FALANGA

Trainer



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My personal blog: <https://carminerodi.wordpress.com/>

Education: Master degree in Business Administration in 2002; numerous trainings for trainers since then, most notably the SALTO Training for Trainers in 2004-05 and the Guide Training by the School of Lost Borders (USA) in 2014.

Fields/topics you work in: Personal development, games, storytelling, journalism and social media

Experience as a trainer: I worked (2002-2011) as responsible for youth projects for the Eurodesk information centre in Viterbo, Italy. I was in charge of activities with schools, young people and municipalities at the local, regional and national level.

Parallel to that, I have 12 years of experience as a freelance trainer using non-formal education and experiential learning methods.

In this time I was responsible for organising and personally delivering 100+ residential full-time training courses, plus several many other shorter initiatives.

I work often, but not only, in the context of the European programme Erasmus+.

I am regularly cooperating with the Italian NGO "Cooperativa Sociale Muovimente", which I co-founded.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TRAINER?

There is not a clear answer to this question. I know I always wanted to work in a job that involves communication, contact with people and the transmission of ideas and enthusiasm.

I have a background in journalism too, having worked for 6 years for two local newspapers in Italy.

I will answer the question "HOW" later in the interview. As to the "WHY", I can sum it up like this: "To reach out to people and have a positive impact on lives, and society, putting to good use the gifts that I have: creativity, enthusiasm, and a passion for stories of all kinds".

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT BEING A TRAINER?

IT IS: having the possibility to develop learning tools based on my life passions,

storytelling and games, and to apply them with the people I work with. After a good session or workshop, bringing new ideas or experiences to a group, the satisfaction and the impact is visible on people's faces. The vibes are palpable in the air, it's inebriating. That gives me the feeling that I am doing something relevant, that I am doing my part.

IT IS NOT: having to travel very often, at uncomfortable times, having always a suitcase ready and sleeping sometimes in 3-4 different places during the course of a week.

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY TRAINER?

Yes but with limits. Travelling is the worst part (again). I know the carbon footprint of all my mobility – and of the people that I support – is probably irredeemable. I try to have a light impact in any other area of my life. Examples: by using public transport rather than car, reducing the

consumption of meat food products, not buying more than I need and avoiding wastes, being responsible with separating waste and composting basically everywhere I go.

HOW DID YOU BECOME A TRAINER?

It was not planned, my career path is somewhat of a happy accident and still is largely an experimental process (not without mistakes!).

After my degree, I was looking for a position that would give me opportunities in that sense. I found it in European Youth Work. I loved it so much that I started to look for opportunities to be more involved in it. So I started to find trainings. Then I started to find trainings for trainers. And slowly and gradually, I became a trainer.

I created the opportunities for a strong start. I was already working in delivering workshops and facilitating training courses, during my university years. Then at my position as Eurodesk officer in Viterbo, I was delivering regularly lectures, presentations and workshops to a wide and diverse



audience of young (and not only) people. This would happen 2-3 times a week, sometimes more, for 9 years. In the meantime I started to work as youth leader and organiser of European youth mobility projects, and with EVS volunteers.

In this way I could put thousands of hours of direct experience “under my belt”. There is no other source of experience than direct practice, and it's the only way I can recommend. Start working, no matter how (and no matter how well paid, if at all), and work hard.

I could share experiences with some excellent colleagues (and others, less excellent) and learn from all of them. I have been in critical situations and emergencies, and learned how to manage all sorts of challenging groups. I guess it's the 10 thousand hours that define experience in any given job.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF BEING A TRAINER?

I never stop learning, innovating and exploring. There is never a moment when I sit and think “ok this is it, I will be doing this for the rest of my life now”. I am always reading, learning, finding inspiration wherever I can, from all sorts of sources.

I am always planning the events that will happen in the next 3, 6, sometimes 12 months. This means I have to think with a long term perspective, while focusing on the highest intensity of the jobs I am currently doing.

And to work with people sometimes can be very hard. In order to transmit motivation and passion (not to mention, sometimes,



information too) my energy has to be at the top, including physical, mental and spiritual condition. This means I try to take care of myself, to sleep and eat regularly, drink and party in moderation, exercise. Age of course also matters here.

I try to be honest with myself and to have a relaxed attitude but working with groups means to be constantly judged and evaluated, and sometimes not very kindly. This also creates a constant pressure.

DO YOU HAVE SOME TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BECOME TRAINERS?

I said it before, in question number 4. Start doing it, don't wait for the big opportunity to come. Don't expect to make a lot of money, especially at the beginning. And work, work, work.

Once you will have thousands of hours behind you, you will not need to define yourself "an expert": it will be self-evident. Don't feel depressed or defeated after mistakes or bad experiences, rest assured you will make many (of both). They will hurt: learn how to learn from them. Always stay humble.

Find a specialty field that will define you, and learn everything you can about it. Specialise. People will remember you more if you bring something unique (or rare) to their learning experiences. There are many trainers who can do a "good enough job" in everything they do.

But you will be able to provide a memorable experience if you become "one of the best" at something.

And always, always cultivate and preserve what gives you the enthusiasm and motivation to be in this field. If you take passion away from it, there is nothing left.

This is not a job, it's a profession or a life choice.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR FACILITATING A TRAINING COURSE?

Literally everywhere. I am a sponge, I absorb stories, inspiration, games from every possible source. I dive deep into reading, books by experts or online sources, I watch hours of videos on a topic. Youtube is a gold mine, but searching can take a while (there is also a big amount of rubbish online, of course).

As I said before, I try to spend the 1-2 days before a training course getting "in good shape", which means physically, but also mentally and spiritually. I take time for myself, I spend time with the people I love, I do something nice like a good dinner out, or going to cinema. All at the same time while getting immersed in the topic of the training, preparing material, some sessions – especially if the topic is experimental or not entirely familiar.

BARBARA FÖLDI

Trainer

Country: Hungary

Contact information: <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toy/profile/>

Education: ELTE PPK (HU) Adult Education, ELTE TÓK (HU) Youth Work

Fields/topics you work in: Sustainability, Entrepreneurship, Soft Skills development, Personal Development

Experience as a trainer:

CEO at ReCreativity Social Enterprise

Method development – Creative recycling

TC: Greenspiration (CZ), Cycle Up (GE), Advertising the Change (HU), etc



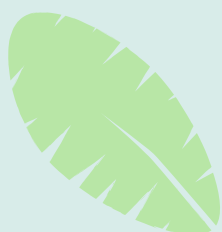
WHY DID YOU BECOME A TRAINER?

I was always fascinated by working with people, especially young people. It gives me a lot of inspiration and I can also inspire others. I love to share knowledge and I believe that we can change the world by collaboration, sharing and common growth. I believe education is the only way to change our world where we live and by supporting each other and sharing knowledge we can make a difference.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT BEING A TRAINER?

I truly enjoy the preparation phase of the program, when I have time to prepare the content and choose the program elements – and after having a group in front of me and change it according to their needs and questions. I love the flexibility in it.

Also I love when I see that participants are taking actions in their daily or professional life and they use the new knowledge that they gained.



The very best part is being a trainer recognizing some impact what I might have given after many years by reading a letter, an article.

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY TRAINER?

I am totally engaged towards sustainability. Over the years we have developed several best practises how to make a program sustainable. One method I use during my training courses is called: creative recycling. I use waste material in order to do something useful out of it.

The purpose is not only the upcycling technique itself but also how I use it to develop group dynamics or practice soft skills.

Also I always use as little paper as possible and we have a mug project. On each program what I ask participants is to create their own mugs that they will use during the program and after they can also take home. In this way we avoid using plastic cups, or washing too many cups daily.

Last but not least, as a trainer and program coordinator I have a huge responsibility by choosing the venue of the program and choosing the menu as well.

HOW DID YOU BECOME A TRAINER?

I started as a volunteer in a local NGO. I did my first international program 12 years ago. Since then I have never stopped. I have formal educational recognition, but what I know and use as a trainer is what I learnt by doing.

I had the opportunity for many years to travel across Europe and work with many different types of trainers, topics in various places.

I worked with personal development, with dance as a tool in personal development. It was a long way till I have found my own voice and style as a trainer but all experience counts and made me who I am today as trainer.

It has been 5 years that I am working as a trainer – but I always work in a team as I want to give back the same opportunity to others that I got when I was a junior trainer or assistant.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF BEING A TRAINER?

In the beginning what I found challenging – but now I guess I got used to it – was the uncertainty. I hardly know for more than 6-8 months before what I am going to do and where I will work.

On the other hand if I want to be honest with myself – challenges keep me motivated and I like to find solutions and new ways.

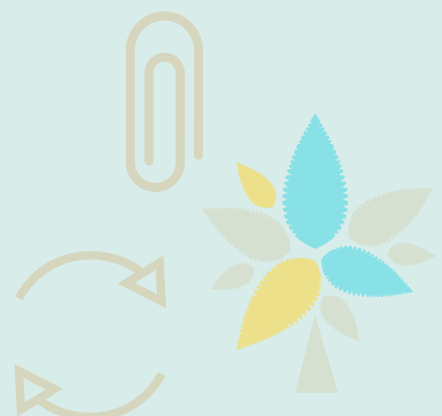
DO YOU HAVE SOME TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BECOME TRAINERS?

My suggestion is to invest time in yourself – do personal development, listen inside and of course invest time as well and travel as much as you can. Search for people who inspire you and go to assist them in programs – because this is how you can learn the most.



WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEBODY TOLD YOU WHEN YOU WERE STARTING AS A TRAINER?

I would have said the following to myself. "Listen, sometimes it will be hard and you will not know how will it be. Do not doubt yourself, just listen to your inner voice! Treat people how you would treat yourself, and always remember it is a gift to work with people and with great power comes great responsibility. Do not forget to recharge, to take care of yourself and always invest into your further education, new methods and training courses because this is how you can grow as a person and as a trainer! Making mistakes is human, never be busy with the past, just take the maximum out of it and note to yourself what will you do differently! "



WHAT MOTIVATES YOU IN YOUR WORK AS A TRAINER?

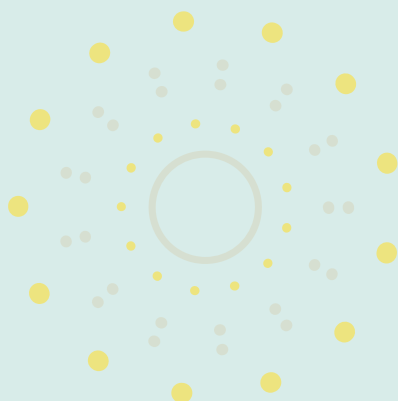
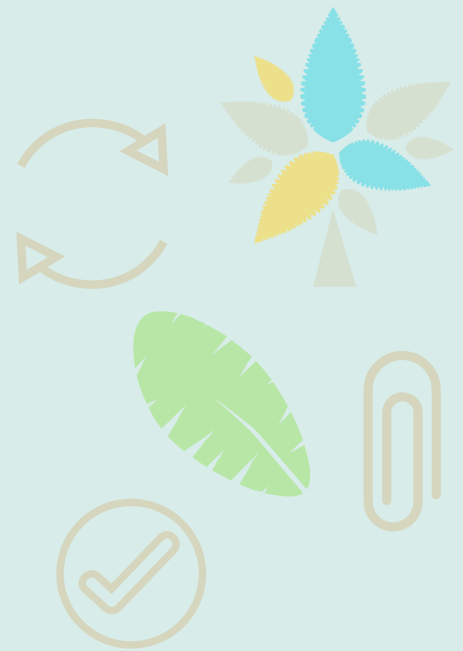
My main motivations are the people who join the program. Lately I have started to work with integrated groups where I work with participants with special needs. Only looking at them and the care what they create it gives me huge motivation and reassurance that I do something valuable.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR FACILITATING A TRAINING COURSE?

I have topics in which I am more involved, so whatever I find in a book, internet or magazine I just save. So I have a huge resource system. Before a program I just check everything what I have and I make a selection. I am not only preparing content wise but also I prepare myself with meditation, sport and yoga.

HOW DO YOU PROMOTE YOURSELF?

I have my SALTO profile and also I am on LinkedIn. I am usually invited according to personal connections – someone who knows my work/style/values. As this profession has a really important personal factor I guess it is hard to make yourself visible online but I know there are great tools for it. In the future I plan to make some videos and maybe a website as well.



SEBASTIAN BURCH

Trainer

Country: Spain

Contact information: www.gaiaysofia.com

Education: MSc PG Dip Holistic Science

Fields/topics you work in: Nature Based Learning, Holistic farming & communication

Experience as a trainer: 7 years facilitating non formal learning experience with Gaia y Sofia S.L.L, Posada del Valle, Schumacher College, Biodiversa, YEE and others. Some of the training courses have been "Soil For Life", "Green Urban Cycles", "Connecting to Nature", "Green Entrepreneurs", "Backpack Journalism for Youth Eco-innovation", "3 Senses", "Ruralize Yourself", "The way of Food", "Earth Pilgrims"



WHY DID YOU BECOME A TRAINER?

I guess it has to do with how much I value non formal education, because I enjoy challenges and really appreciate the opportunity to be creative with others around topics that are close to my heart.

I feel at home with the role of "facilitation", working with complex processes, assisting personal and group learning experiences and flowing with eventualities.

Mainly, I guess it was because I had the opportunity to explore the role, great facilitators inspired me and slowly shared with me different responsibilities. I felt the confidence in myself and others grow, so I guess I eventually took on a "big step" and before I knew it I was seen by others as a trainer.

I am really passionate about changing education and our relation to the other-than human world and these two aspects combine very well in the world of non formal education.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT BEING A TRAINER?

Actually, I can think of three different moments I really enjoy in a training experience.

First, at the beginning, when preparing for a training activity, before anything has even started, I always let my imagination go wild... and this is how it starts for me... with just a few basic variables it feels like anything can happen, so - as a facilitator - I have to set clear and sensible "boundaries" that will allow things to flow in a safe and constructive manner.

Then secondly, when it's all unfolding, and a planned activity is taking place... the unexpected starts to come into being and all the things that I could never have imagined begin to happen and become real - this part is quite amazing - to watch how participants exchange personal experiences in a shared place and time is a real privilege.

Finally, when it seems as if it was all over. Sometimes it can even be years after a training experience, maybe as I am walking along a river, I suddenly remember something that must have been hidden away in -the water of my unconscious- and a story that joins many dots, starts to make sense. I learn something new, something deep. This is also a pretty special feeling.

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY TRAINER?

Yes I do, very much so! Even if I still have a long way to learn.

Sustainability and environmental awareness are key aspects I continuously work with as a trainer. How? Well, by taking learning “outside the box”, i.e.

1. by going outdoors, moving into wilder spaces, places that share stories of other than human;
2. by co-creating low impact and self-sufficient living communities;
3. and finally but not least: by animating the world around me, through ritual, science and stories, reducing my need of digital technology, just by valuing, caring and using the simplest but most meaningful things around me.

There is a community tool sometimes called “care groups” that entails creating a set of alternating daily work-groups dedicated to taking care of common spaces and needs. My favourite are gardening, harvesting, gathering and cooking work-groups; I find there is so much to learn and share around food and its huge role in the world.

The latest workshop I have held is a very special workshop on a topic that really excites me, it was called “The Secrets of Plants” and it's about introducing a “way of being” with plants that is conducive to significant learning, by experiencing the reciprocity of awareness between plants and

humans, i.e. by treating trees as mindful observers and great teachers.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF BEING A TRAINER?

Personally, I think there are many challenges when being a trainer. Mainly because of the huge possibility of situations and tasks that test my ability to hold a safe space and lead an authentic group process in the most inclusive way possible.

Sometimes, getting ready for an activity can prove quite challenging, if I get “stuck” with some preoccupation or fear, I can lose time and spend a lot of unnecessary energy on really small issues... whilst other times big “problems” can emerge during an activity and therefore become new “pressing topics” that swipe initial intended themes. In these moments, I find letting go and embracing the unintended to be quite challenging.

Personally, I find another recurring test on being a good trainer, to attentively listen to feedback (a lot of times), sometimes I don't know what to do. It can be a little despairing, but when I find my personal magic formula and I do it constructively, I can see how it builds up and enriches my personality and work.



HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR FACILITATING A TRAINING COURSE?

I think that preparing for facilitation is a - sense making- process. What I mean by this, is that you don't stop preparing, until things start to make sense. It's like a state of mind, a predisposition or an attitude, something that is impossible to measure, but you can feel it, when you have achieved it.

There are three senses that I like to use to guide me. My sense of the "place" I will be at, the "community" I will be with and finally but not last, the "Self" I want to bring forth into the training.

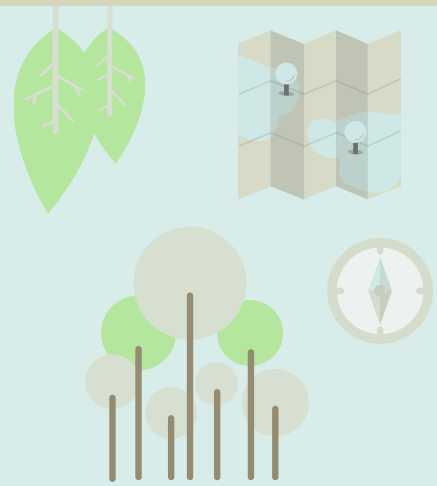
If it is possible I like to dedicate as much time as I can walking and getting to know the place where I am going to work. I find that little stories of the place are very universal. It is easier to share a common meaningful experience if we reflect ourselves in the direct environment we are in.

I also like to read any material the participants have provided about themselves before the course as many times as possible, so as to get a "common sense" of what is expected and the potentials of the group.

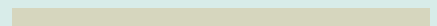
When it finally comes to designing activities, I like to keep things as simple as possible; I like to draw from things I have vividly experienced myself before, be it as a trainer or participant. No matter how modern or "hip" a topic is, I tend to find myself dwelling around ancient ways of addressing these same questions.

HOW DO YOU PROMOTE YOURSELF AS A TRAINER?

Word of mouth by those who know me and my "presence" on the Internet are my two main ways of promoting myself as a trainer. I feel the latter should serve as a corroboration of the first, so that if someone has heard about me, and they decide to Google me, they find the things they want to see, if you know what I mean... ;)



More than personal branding I think it is about sharing your personal story. In an honest, updated and engaging way. There is an ever growing interest in the field of facilitation and training, an overall sign of positive interest in new ways of learning and sharing. However, from a professional networking point of view, my advice is try and find your true essence and learn to let go, so that there is enough for each one of us to specialize, -or become special- with our own skills, attitudes and knowledge.



NIK PADDISON

Trainer



Country: Montenegro

Contact information:

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<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toy/nik-paddison.95/>

Education: Master Degree: Peace and Reconciliation

Fields/topics you work in: Training of trainers and facilitators; Training of youth workers; Non-formal education/learning; Roma rights and issues; Participation; European citizenship; Hate Speech; Human Rights; Women's Rights; Conflict transformation; Peacebuilding; Creativity; Inter-religious dialogue; Intercultural dialogue/learning; Sustainability and the environment; Presentations and public speaking; Recognition and assessment of non-formal learning...

Experience as a trainer:

International Institutions

These include the EU-CoE Youth Partnership, Council of Europe Youth Department, Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme of the European Commission, SALTO Resource Centres (South East Europe, Training and Cooperation, Eastern Europe and Caucasus and EUROMED), and the Eastern Partnership Youth Forum, Lithuania and Latvia.

European Networks

Youth and Environment Europe – Prague, Czech Republic; Youth for Exchange and Understanding – Brussels, Belgium; Youth Express Network – Strasbourg, France; Youth Peace Ambassadors – Budapest, Hungary.

Non-Governmental Organisations / Civil Society Organisations

Loesje Armenia, Nevo Parudimos Romania, DRONI Georgia, JUB Holland, CEMEA Rhone-Alps France, GiovaniSi Italy, SubKult Switzerland, Youth in Progress Austria, CEIPES Turkey, Centre for Intercultural Development Macedonia, Kreaktiv Macedonia...

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TRAINER?

It was an accident. I thought I was going to participate in a meeting, it was in fact a preparation meeting for a training course. From there I continued to work with the European Network, who was one of the organisers of that original meeting, and became part of the Board. This led to many opportunities for being a trainer and developing as a trainer.

Even if I was probably the worst trainer ever in the beginning I liked the idea of it, I enjoyed meeting people from different countries and slowly over time I developed into being a good trainer. Now I do it because it is my passion.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT BEING A TRAINER?

-I love being in front of a group – this is the ego part but I think it is important to acknowledge that for some of us like me, the performance is a key part of why we do what we do! Though this is also a point that needs to be strongly controlled, otherwise we get to the point where we do it only for the ego and ourselves!

-The creativity is such a buzz for me, creating new activities, reading up on new theories or learning something new about a theory or model. Working out how to do something that I always do in a different way.

-I love learning new stuff, every training course requires me to learn, reading articles theories, understanding a new activity, going through manuals...



-I love seeing people learn, watching an individual or a group immerse themselves into a subject, get excited about a learning point, being creative themselves.

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY TRAINER?

Unfortunately not very much so. I use rather a lot of paper. I do endeavour to get projects I work on to recycle and reuse. Unfortunately the training world is being slow in coming up with alternatives to paper. The digital options are there and are potentially very good for the few who know how to use them properly but even a well produced PowerPoint destroys the group dynamic by taking the focus on the group to a screen outside of the group.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF BEING A TRAINER?

The most difficult challenge this year for me has been the working conditions. Rooms with columns in the middle. No access to the training room until the day the training starts. Complete misunderstanding of what materials were asked for (even with pictures provided). Rooms with limited or no natural light. Too small, or rectangular so it is impossible to make a circle of chairs. Overwhelming heat or cold.

The list this year has been endless!



One of the biggest challenges a trainer needs to work on is the relationship with the organiser. In most of the above cases either it was an institution messing up or there was just no choice. However in many instances where a trainer gets frustrated with the working conditions it is because of a lack of communication between the trainer and the organiser. Organisers often do not understand trainer's needs and trainers don't understand organisers' needs. Trainers are often assuming the organiser will just understand when in fact they don't because each trainer is different with different needs and even if we talk about the same thing we don't necessarily mean the same thing. Organisers are not trainers, even if they support a lot of training courses. Trainers need to give more credit for the work of the organisers and recognise how difficult their job is. We need to stop assuming they can meet our every half vocalised need.

DO YOU HAVE SOME TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BECOME TRAINERS?

I was a terrible school teacher like trainer when I started. I am quite ashamed of my approach and lack of understanding of what a trainer is or how they should work! OK that was a long time ago, however, the way





I am also producing materials with my brand logo. Not to sell but to partly get good training materials to a wider audience of fellow trainers and partly as a promotion of myself and my work.

I don't think the youth sector is good at promoting itself, whether it be direct youth work or the training sector. Often it is looked down on to be self promoting because we are the voluntary or the caring sector and our main focus should be the 'client' not ourselves. I totally disagree with this. We do some amazing work in the youth sector and if we can promote it and show it off then go for it. There is little enough recognition of what we do, let's not hide it.

I learned the best was to watch more experienced people and those who actually knew what they were doing. I watched the different styles, I took what I liked and rejected what I did not. Every training course, conference, study session, or seminar I would continuously analyse what the people at the front were doing, how they were doing it, why they did it in that way, how I would do it differently, etc. I still do it today, it makes me a bit of a critical participant but it helps me understand better how to do my job. Attending as a participant is important, as much as it is great to be the trainer, it is just as important to be a participant from time to time. Then you discover others doing similar things as a trainer that you do only you see it from the receiving side and sometimes you realise that the thing that you do is really annoying and stupid! So you change it and hopefully find a less annoying way of doing it.



HOW DO YOU PROMOTE YOURSELF AS A TRAINER?

I do actually have a brand and a 'gimmick'. It started off as a joke but has now become my trademark. Odd socks, I wear them, my email and web site use the name. It is how people know me and it is a good way for me to promote myself and my brand as a quality trainer – with an edge of fun! Other tools that are used by trainers include the Ukulele, Hawaiian style shirts, use of jewelry (large earrings), etc.

ANTHONY BURROWES

Trainer

Country: Ireland

Contact information: tonysocialpolicy@gmail.com

Education: Masters in Youth and Community work

Fields/topics you work in:

Youth Work

-Sustainable Development

-Climate Change

-Youth Policy

-Mental Health

-LGBTQ*

-Peer Education

-Campaigning

Experience as a trainer:

As a youth worker in Ireland my role is to facilitate and lead training for young people, youth workers and adults who are concerned for young people. The NGOs that I have worked with are: ECO UNESCO

Facilitated a group called 'youth for sustainable development'; Provided training to youth workers on the Sustainable Development Goals; Provided accredited training in Peer Education and Sustainable Development; Provided accredited training in Community Development

UNICEF

Facilitated workshops on Climate Change and Sustainable Development

BeLong To

Training on LGBTQ* mental health; Facilitated workshops on Trans* young people in Ireland;

Provided training on the topic of peer education

Union of Students of Ireland

Training on LGBTQ* mental health

JIGSAW

Training on the topic of youth mental health



WHY DID YOU BECOME A TRAINER?

While I was growing up I saw that there wasn't much of a young person's voice in decision making. They were not asked about their opinion on topics that would concern or relate to them. At this point adults were seen to know what would benefit young people with consulting them. This is changing and after doing a degree in social policy I realised that I wanted to work with young people so that they were empowered to take action on topics that concerned and interested them. I completed my degree in social policy and was successful enough to do a master in youth and community work. The masters supported me in developing my skill in facilitation and workshop development.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT BEING A TRAINER?

There are so many aspects of training that I enjoy as there are so many different types of training, depending on the group, topic and task that I am working with.

One of the most rewarding part of training for me, is when a person that you have been working with for a while, who has not fully engaged in the discussion (for a number of reasons) builds up the confidence to involve themselves in the conversation as they see it as a safe space.

Another great part of being a trainer is when a group that you have been working with on a task where there has been differing opinions, works together to come to a consensus that suits everyone.



DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY TRAINER?

Yes I would consider myself an environmentally friendly trainer.

-On a functional level I would make use of all of the equipment that I have at my disposal. Part of being a trainer is to create with the tools that you are provided.

-For the past number of years I have worked with ECO UNESCO - Ireland's environmental youth organisation. In this role I have developed and facilitated trainings on a number of different environmental topics. I have empowered and supported young people to take action on issues that affect climate change. I have raised awareness of the topic of sustainability and climate change for young people in Ireland.

-I have sat on a working group with the European Youth Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals, to make sure there was a youth voice in the decision making process on the SDG's.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF BEING A TRAINER?

The biggest challenge as a trainer is believing that you are a trainer. You may have completed a number of training courses to develop your skills but it is not until you have the belief in yourself that you can truly call yourself a trainer.

DO YOU HAVE SOME TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BECOME TRAINERS?



As a trainer you don't have to be the most confident person in the room and you don't necessarily have to know the topic very well. What you have to be is open minded and have the skill to bring everyone involved into the conversation.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU IN YOUR WORK AS A TRAINER?

Since I was 8 years of age I have been involved in the Scout Movement. I have ground up in the NGO sector, either as a participant, volunteer or paid trainer. I began participating in the NGO sector because I wanted to make friends, now I want to make a positive change in the society that I live in. For many years I have been a youth worker in Ireland and a political activist on a European level.

It is very important to raise awareness on topics and themes, but without actions there is no change.

'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'
Nelson Mandela

MONIKA NOVOSADOVA

Trainer

Country: Czech Republic

Contact information: mnovosadova@hotmail.com

Education: Social work

Fields/topics you work in: Project management, NGO management, soft skills (and more generally competence development), methodological support and non-formal education (including training of trainers and youth workers on how to do educational activities), youth policy

Experience as a trainer: Very diverse and a bit long.

Lately I work on long-term trainings for youth workers on improving the quality of their educational activities



WHY DID YOU BECOME A TRAINER?

I was working as a volunteer for an international youth organisation (International Young Naturefriends) and participated in a seminar, when a member of the team of trainers told me that he saw that I have a potential in becoming an educator. As I have already been involved in different leisure time activities with learning aspects before, I thought “why not?”

Becoming a full-time trainer was a similar story – I was recommended to the Czech National Agency who was looking for trainers and, as I had already been doing educational activities as a part of my job for 3 years and was looking for something else in my life, I decided to take the opportunity up.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT BEING A TRAINER?

Supporting people in finding their AHA moments and to be able to look at who they are, where they are and what it means to them.

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY TRAINER?

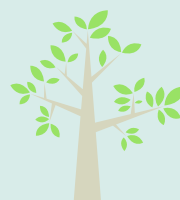
Yes, even though, as I am freelancing, it is not always easy to keep up with my own expectations. The minimum that I try to do when working for someone else (which is

most of my work) is to always concentrate on several things:

- using as little resources as possible that cannot be re-used: printing out only the things that need to be printed, re-using flipcharts, papers, any other material that is possible;
- creating a possibility to divide trash to be recycled (even if it sometimes means that we have to take the trash with us and place it to the bins somewhere else);
- use as little plastic as possible (get drinking water in a jar rather than bottled water in plastic bottles, get normal glasses and cups instead of plastic ones, etc.);
- travel (and motivate participants to travel) the most sustainable way possible;
- taking care of materials that can be re-used to use at as many trainings as possible.

And when I run activities when I can do more I also try to:

- look for places that use local products as much as possible;
- buy local products for snacks, etc.;
- give time and space in the programme to do some environmental or awareness-raising activity (we already did fair trade breakfasts, volunteering to clean up environment around, volunteered at a local organisation doing some environmental stuff...)





DO YOU HAVE SOME TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BECOME TRAINERS?

First of all, think about the reasons, why you want to do it – it might look fun but there is a lot of responsibility that you take on yourself, even if you are not aware. There are many other ways to work with people and support them and this is not the easiest one. :-)

Next one for me would be to think about the areas in which I have some practical experience – it is easier to start from something that you already know from your own experience and it also gives it more credibility towards the group.

Then a big thing for me is – what kind of trainer do I want to be? What values do I stand up for? What kind of place in the group and relationship to them I would like to have – do I rather want to be an expert, a supporter, an entertainer or a friend? And how can I incorporate the other aspects that are not so natural or so important to me? In my experience none of the four is the most important, it is important to have a bit of each and choose which role to take depending on the situation.

And last but not least – how not to take myself too seriously and still be realistic and honest with myself is the last tip I find important not only for people who want to start working as trainers. There is a lot of attention given to us as trainers due to our role and it is easy to start believing we are fabulous, fantastic people, who are endlessly smart, funny and so on and so forth. And yes, we are. Just like anybody else... and to keep an ability to laugh at oneself as a trainer and to realise that we are just humans like everybody else keeps the job and our role more real.

WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEBODY TOLD YOU WHEN YOU WERE STARTING AS A TRAINER?

It is a lot of responsibility and it is a very roller-coaster-like life – so learning how to differentiate what is work and what is personal is very important as much as what I need as a person and what are the needs of the group and how to find a solution that can fit both. And keeping the balance between time to rest and time to work and finding things to do to keep oneself in a good shape helps a lot, especially when the training course is very interesting. For that I do, for example, yoga every morning for at least 10 minutes, go at least once a day outside for a walk (as short as it gets sometimes), drink less coffee and more water :-) - you will find your own “things” that keep you not only alive, that keep you in a good shape and good mood.

And for me, it is also important to work on the topics that I care about and enjoy – the more it is like that the more I am also curious and ready to learn new things from the others (including participants, of course). In my experience it helps to create an atmosphere, where people are ready to share and in the same time to try new things – if they see me trying out they get more confidence to do so, too. This took me a long time to learn.





HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR FACILITATING A TRAINING COURSE?

Interestingly enough it feels like I spend more time preparing nowadays than I did some years ago. As I prefer to create a programme that is based on what the participants need and where they are, it is not always easy to prepare just one fixed programme. So I take a lot of time to:

- find out what the participants need (not so much what they expect);
- find out where participants are (what experiences they have, what reality they live in, etc.);
- create different scenarios – I usually have plan A and plan B depending on where the group might be;
- share what I prepared with my colleagues and ask them for feedback. Sometimes we prepare the programme parts in pairs, that helps a lot to already have different views from the start;
- think of different scenarios that can happen when the group goes through the programme as I have planned it – what are the risks, what are the challenges for the group, what support can I offer that they can manage;
- look at the programme from a perspective of different learning styles – is there something for everyone? Is the programme balanced in terms of input, trying things out, sharing in the group, connecting it to one's reality?
- look at the time frame and cut out half of the programme – through experience I have realised that I tend to put more activities into the programme than the group can do and still feel that it is not a TGV ride, so more

and more I try to do less activities and give more time for participants to dive into them.

Yes, it looks like a lot of preparation. I realised that it helps me a lot to really spend time preparing the course beforehand because, when I feel that I have different balls I can juggle with prepared in my pockets, it is then easier to be at the training with the group and for the group and really react on what is happening on the spot. And with practice it gets a bit easier, yet it is always important to give it enough (and it means a lot of) time beforehand.

And for resources – more and more I create or re-create exercises depending on what is needed during the training courses. I also often use activities that I have experienced myself. Then the next solution is that I ask my colleagues for recommendations. Then I look for videos (so I can see a bit what the activity looks like) and then I look on-line. I start with SALTO Toolbox, even though often I keep on searching elsewhere. Based on Google Searches.

Yes, it is not the easiest way. In the same time sometimes I discover things I would have not, if I did not let myself float around searching for a while. Well, often a longer while I shall say.



*The project “**Meet your Trainer**” was created by Youth and Environment Europe for young people who would like to become trainers in non-formal educational field.*



www.yeenet.eu

Funders:

