



Youth

REINFORCEMENT OF NON FORMAL EDUCATION AND THE SOCIAL
PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN YOUTH CENTRES

YOUTH programme
Action 5
SUPPORT MEASURES



Report on Methodology Design



Introduction

As a participant in the project - 'Reinforcement of Non-formal Education and the Social Participation of Youth in Youth Centres' - NGO Equilibrium (EQ) has undertaken to explore the theme of 'Institutions and organisations of the European Union' in the context of devising and piloting the implementation of a methodology in informal education. This methodology is geared towards the fulfilment of the project aims expressed in the following terms in the Memorandum of Agreement jointly signed by EQ and ARSIS - Association for the Social Support of Youth -

"...strengthening of competencies of youth in danger, the improvement of their self-image and self-appreciation with the ultimate goal of prevent(ing) social marginalization and combating school drop-out."

EQ's methodology was designed in response to the educational environment in which we find ourselves and in reaction to a Balkan child welfare paradigm characterized by an agonizingly slow departure from the traditional approach of coercion and containment directed at children who are socially disadvantaged and / or educationally handicapped. We are a long way from seeing a desire to maximize the potential of every child imbedded in institutional culture.

Bulgarian Educational Environment

The EQ team comprises specialists in working with children and young adults who are educationally / socially disadvantaged. In our website we state that "(y)oung people fail to thrive in their schooling and social interaction for a large variety of reasons. The problem is especially acute in countries like Bulgaria that attempt to model members of the younger generation by means of authoritarian or chauvinistic pressures".

The state education system has been characterized by Prof. Anna-Maria Totomanova who states that "many observers indicate that Bulgarian classrooms are still dominated by rote memorization, authoritarian teachers, theory without practice, and little chance for children or young people to exercise their creative, problem-solving abilities" ('The Role of Bulgarian Universities in the Transformation of Society', 2002).

Very little youth activity escapes the influence of an education establishment that behaves like a many-tentacled monster with the following implications -

- A training ethos prevails throughout most youth activity with an accent on competition and the pursuit of awards
- There is a lack of a transparent, broad-ranging interface between schools and educational service providers in the community that can lead to the expansion of educational horizons
- Youth activity becomes homogenized and infused with nationalism
- There is negligible youth-led activity: youth participation is often tokenistic or elitist
- Organizations depend on the approval of schools to attract a worthwhile membership
- There are few opportunities in informal education or structured education for kids from low-income communities

EQ's involvement in this project is seen to be part of our effort to counteract these shortcomings.

The Challenge for EQ

As stated in the introduction, EQ's job was to present the subject of the institutions and organizations of the EU in an informal context employing the techniques of experiential or interactive education. We were to work among disadvantaged teenagers from communities characterized by a degree of social deprivation. We needed to show the relevance of the issues to the lives of the children - link them to aspects of their day-to-day existence.

In addition, because of the prevailing teaching method, Bulgarian school children simply do not know how to openly *interact* with educators. This restricts the development of important life skills, namely

- Voicing an opinion (without sounding like an overbearing or opinionated adult)
- Formulating an argument
- Negotiating and reaching compromise

- Being assertive and tenacious in response to unreasonable barriers
- Cooperating as a team member
- Learning not to take yourself too seriously
- Recognising that humour is valuable in promoting learning, innovation and group solidarity
- Recognising authority based on valid criteria (knowledge, experience and leadership skills)
- Thinking out-of-the-box and departing from formulae (precisely the abilities that those with limited options - the underprivileged - require)

Although significantly challenged by the task, we saw the benefit of exploring the boundaries of informal, workshop-based education and seeing whether we could find a suitably frothy approach to a subject that is intrinsically dry and heavy on facts and figures.

Here is how we defined the job in hand -

If EQ can have a group of so-called 'uneducable' children engage with a subject that has the capacity to bore a roomful of professors, we are providing a valuable message to the educational community.

Our Approach

Our job was to do more than simply identify the various institutions and EC youth initiatives and define their functions. Also, EQ couldn't impose its internal Communication Culture on the teenaged audience. A fair proportion of our target group was floundering academically, truancy was a significant issue and aversion to the norms of the classroom was evident. These children reveal a thought process linked to a predominantly 'oral' culture reflecting their own particular versions of street language and a tendency to glean information that they considered important from verbal sources. Those of us working in the NGO community gain a great deal of our information from reading, creating a "print" culture thought process.

The run-of-the mill 'informal' workshop uses gimmicks derived from sources as diverse as kindergarten and the sloganized world of marketing that have gradually become formularized in the hands of NGOs and training organizations. They are part of the tool-kit.

Unfortunately, most of the ready-made teaching aids we'd seen relating to EC institutions are highly dependent on print culture. In so far as we have to communicate facts about the European Institutions, the subject matter probably lends itself to this style of conceptualisation involving diagrams and bullet-pointed presentations but it was highly unlikely that this would serve to hold the attention of the young people in question far less inspire them. Multi-media ingenuity may succeed in grabbing attention for 5 minutes but it probably wasn't the key to success in this venture.

The in-vogue techniques of designing posters on flipchart paper, 'brainstorming' (and similar activities) could easily be overused in our eagerness to avoid didactic delivery. EQ needed to devise a multi-textured approach that employed what was best from the alternative educational orthodoxies - formal and informal - and also used elements from other types of performance art that could be employed educationally. After all, this needed to be a performance extraordinaire to render a grey subject colourful. We looked to the world of theatre and children's literature.

We set about selectively imbedding factual information into an interactive format and aimed to adhere to the following criteria -

- Highly personalized and dynamic
- Adopts theatrical performance techniques - storytelling / cabaret / pantomime
- Defied expectation without being confusing or disjointed
- Incorporated humour and irreverence
- Provided short, self-contained packets of varied activity

We did, however, choose to use PowerPoint to

- create a constant backdrop
- reinforce detail provided orally
- provide continuity and create a sense of sequential progress

(A workshop will rapidly degenerate into chaos if the links between activities aren't strong enough.)

Design Principles

Theatrical devices

A lot of humour

Good visual impact

Variety and texture

Room for improvisation

But..Thought provoking and informative

Workshop Duration

The main body of the material could be delivered in three half-day sessions with the second afternoon used as a discursive, wrapping-up session.

Thus -

Day 1 - Morning - session 1 / lunch / Afternoon - session 2

Day 2 - Morning - session 3 / lunch / Afternoon - wrapping-up

The Team

It would be difficult to achieve the style of delivery EQ envisages without a team of at least 5 adults with one of the team acting as the main facilitator.

Reasons -

- Significant movement, theatricality and role play (needed people to play characters)
- Preparation and placement of materials - props and equipment
- Fast changeovers and ensuring materials / equipment are readily to hand

Group size and Age Range

A group of roughly 15 children in the age range 12-16.

Starting a Session - Breaking the Ice

Equipment

For sake of speed and convenience, we used a multimedia system for this exercise - PowerPoint slides projected onto a screen. It can also be done using ready-made posters on flipchart paper.

Execution

No great mystery surrounds the process of breaking the ice. It simply involves dealing with novelty by a process of introduction while giving the children the time to adjust to circumstances to which they are probably unaccustomed. It also provides the facilitators with the opportunity to explore the dynamics of the groups and identify the various personalities at play. There is no *correct* or *best* way of doing this.

Several international youth organizations (eg YMCA) advocate the use of special games with which to kick off a workshop and examples can be found on their websites. Such games instill an immediate sense of fun and the rules provide a sense of security - the kids understand what is expected of them in a situation which is different from school. This is quite important at this early stage in the proceedings.

The games tend to involve taking turns to undertake some sort of short performance and this creates a sense of *fairness* - everybody does the **same** thing (or similar).

It is important for the adult facilitator(s) to take part. Our experience has demonstrated that children respond very favourably when the facilitators introduce themselves fully and unreservedly using the same criteria as those that apply for the young participants. So, if the kids quote their hobbies, the adults should do likewise. Such a process of *reciprocation* is a highly important component of the facilitation of informal or experiential Learning.

This is a difficult thing for some adults to do but **you do not need to be authoritarian or distant in order to maintain authority**. The efficacy of Experiential Education is reduced if the "distance" between the educators and learners is too great. However, bear in mind that to make a workshop teenager friendly does not mean that the facilitators need to behave like teenagers. Few people are natural jokers and a group will tire of someone who constantly *over-performs*.

For the sake of this workshop, we provided silly CVs presented by means of PowerPoint slides for each of the facilitators each one culminating in the statement of that particular person's 'worst habit'. This was designed to create a recipe for future nonsense eg

Bad habits? Desi likes things to be tidy, clean and shining (including students). *You've been warned!!!*

The introduction of the various adult team members culminated in an invitation for the kids to introduce themselves -

Slide 1

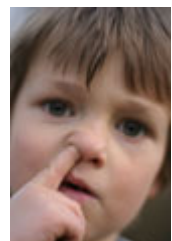
You've met the team

We'd like you to introduce yourselves one at a time

Please tell us your name and your worst habit

Slide 2

Let's give everyone a nickname based on their bad habit



For the rest of the day, everyone wore a badge stating the nickname (eg David, the compulsive hugger, became 'Casanova' during one of the workshops). We bought clip-on, transparent badge holders and insertion cards (that the kids could keep as souvenirs) but 'post-it' notes are also effective.

On the basis of the above, we set the tone for the rest of the proceedings and developed a rapport within the group and between adults and youngsters.

Session 1 - Constructing the local historical / cultural background to EC accession

It will soon become plain that the following detail pertains to Bulgaria - it therefore won't work in other countries. The *principle* is sound nevertheless - identifying keynote events in a country's recent history as footsteps to EC accession while also painting a cultural portrait.

One of the groups we worked with was representative of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. This did not create a desire to pussyfoot around issues pertaining to Bulgaria's liberation from the Ottoman Empire. By the same token, we did not intend to gloss over the fact that many among the parental and grandparental generations are decidedly ambivalent about EC entry and there are historical reasons for this that predate communism. EQ is totally averse to political correctness. There is a great deal to be gained by provoking and cajoling, challenging and teasing when working with teenagers. This is especially true when trying to exorcise demons within marginalized groups. Humour is the key.

Horrible Histories is a series of illustrated books originally published in the UK. They are designed to get children interested in history by treating the subject with child-friendly irreverence and a hint of satire. They focus on the apparently trivial, unusual, gory, or unpleasant. The author is Terry Deary and the cartoonists are Martin Brown and Philip Reeve.

We wanted to create a similarly off-the-wall presentation of the long lead-up to Bulgaria's EC accession. The 1879 Congress of Berlin was an obvious point of focus for a number of reasons but chiefly because -

- It provided a representation of the Great Powers of Europe before the disintegration of the various European empires and a new focus on nation states
- They were addressing what Otto von Bismarck called "European issues" before the EC existed. What were these issues?
- It gave a graphic demonstration of European powers imposing their authority on emergent nations

Here's the background -

The Countdown to Bulgarian freedom

1652 - Paisii of the Hilendar Monastery (on Mount Athos) wrote "The Slavonic-Bulgarian History".

1828 - The first Russian-Turkish War takes place.

1870- The organised, national-liberation movement starts.

1876- The April uprising leads to the cruel deaths of many ordinary villagers. The Great Powers of Europe are shocked into action.

1876 - A meeting takes place in Constantinople but the Ottomans won't give Bulgaria any extra freedom. Russia reaches a secret agreement with the Austro-Hungarian Empire that allows them to invade Bulgaria

1877 - 78 - The War of Liberation takes place

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Bulgaria is free to become a nation



ENORMOUS CHEER



But things go drastically wrong -

The Treaty of San Stefano made Bulgaria the largest country in the Balkans but things soon change.....

Bismarck said that the agreement at San Stefano would have been OK if it hadn't interfered with certain 'European issues'. He was talking about 'European issues' before the EC existed. What were these issues?

Some countries in Europe want "to keep the Russians out of Turkey, not to create an ideal existence for Turkish Christians." The words come from Benjamin Disraeli, the British Prime Minister.

The 'issues' in question were the concerns of the Great Powers (sometimes overlapping but frequently mutually exclusive).

Our point of focus was obviously controversial but, even today, resentment about the Treaty of Berlin continues to simmer under the surface. Bulgarian nationals still consider the people of Macedonia to be essentially Bulgarian.

This issue links with the later consideration of the demographic consequences of the disintegration of empires and the isolation of small communities of a certain ethnicity at a considerable distance from the nation in which their fellows represent the majority (as good a reason as any for talking in terms of 'European identity').

Activity

The children can be invited to plan or create an outline script for the theatrical treatment of the events surrounding the San Stefano Treaty and its reversal at the Congress of Berlin. They should be asked to disregard the actual historical characters (Bismarck, Disraeli, Alexander II) but to think in terms of creating metaphorical representations of the various powers in the manner of Deary's *Horrible Histories*.

Example: The once mighty Ottoman Empire was well on the way to becoming 'the sick man of Europe' characterized by its failure to industrialize, its outmoded feudalism, cultural stagnation and the decadence of court and harem.

Provide the group with a selection of largely negative appraisals based on period quotes.

Having put each empire / culture through the shredder, the children can be asked to choose one 'player' (eg Britain) and act as lawyers to defend its interests. They can be provided with suggestions for 'mitigating circumstances' (eg threatened by the prospect of Russia controlling the Bosphorus, a financial interest in supporting the Ottomans and promoting economic reform)

Note: This may sound a little highbrow for teenagers but it can actually be done using soap opera characterization and the group will catch on.

Session 2 - The Deconstruction of Empires

This map shows how Europe looked after the decisions made in Berlin in 1879



Compare this map to another one showing Europe today.

There are various ways of doing this in practice -

- Distribute copies of the contrasting maps to the group members
- Display poster-sized maps next to one another
- Display the two maps next to one another on a PowerPoint slide

Task: What is the main change in the shape of Europe?

Lesson: The breaking up of empires. A new focus on *nation states*.

Point of interest: What was the first nation state in the European continent?

Big clue - it was founded in 681 AD

BULGARIA

Joke

The glorious moment

Asparuh arrives at the Danube



The local people are busy when he arrives



Discussion: Europe is now a continent containing many nations but fewer definable cultures. The children are encouraged to think about the implications of this.

What is "culture"?

People learn. Knowledge, beliefs and patterns of behaviour can be passed from one generation to another.

This creates "culture" - it's the way groups of people

- Identify themselves
- Compare themselves to others
- Show that they are different from others

Is culture the same as nationality?

Not really.

Everyone belongs to many different groups. Each has its own "culture". Our behaviour changes to match the culture.

Also, many countries have similar cultures.

Many European countries contain people from many world cultures (not all European)

Discussion: Does it make sense to talk in terms of 'European culture'? Why should anyone want to? Is this an artificial idea? Is it important to protect local culture?

This brings us to question of reconciling

- Local interests
- National interests
- European interests

This needs to be examined at a level the kids can understand. We chose scenarios that could be presented in a light-hearted manner -

- The recent levying of new taxes on the yield of *rakiya* (fruit schnapps) and the resultant village protests (regulation impinges on village tradition)
- The notional proposal to introduce a new symbol to the **phonetic** Bulgarian (Cyrillic) alphabet to represent a sound adopted from a highly unlikely source: Gaelic - Scotland / Saami - Finland (the effect of internationalism on the 'purity' of regional / national languages)
- BTV being taken over by SKY - TV and resultant sacking of Slavi Trifanov (a hugely popular talk-show host and musician) to be replaced by Ricky Gervais - the British comedy actor / writer who is becoming recognized in Bulgaria (the homogenization of popular culture)

Each scenario can be presented in the form of a comic sketch featuring a debate or contest between the **For** and **Against** lobbies (eg Bulgarian villager of a certain age replete with fur hat and ribbons for military service in heated debate with Mariann Fischer Boel, the EC Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development)

Task: There are now 27 countries in the EC. Who are they?

Well, in the beginning there were six who joined together in the 1950s and called themselves the 'European communities'.

Another six joined between 1973 and 1986.



These 12 countries are represented by the 12 stars on the flag.

There are now 27 countries in the EC but there are no plans to change the flag.

Do you think this is a good decision?

Split into 2 teams. Appoint a team captain. Each team has a list of 30 countries. Which three countries in the list are not yet members of the EC?

(The 12 'star' countries are coloured blue on your sheets)

| EC Member States | |
|------------------|----------------|
| Austria | Malta |
| Belgium | Poland |
| Bulgaria | Portugal |
| Croatia | Romania |
| Cyprus | Slovakia |
| Czech Republic | Slovenia |
| Denmark | Spain |
| Estonia | Sweden |
| Finland | Netherlands |
| France | United Kingdom |
| Germany | Turkey |
| Greece | Hungary |
| Ireland | Italy |
| Latvia | Lithuania |
| Luxemburg | Macedonia |

Did we forget to mention the colour red? (= the 3 countries they needed to identify)

Introducing a significant theatrical character - Bay Ganya (female) based on a literary character, Bay Ganyo, created by Aleko Konstantinov.

Konstantinov's character is seen as an amalgam of the worst traits of 'the average Bulgarian' but the satire is double-edged. The portrait of Bulgarian-ness was created shortly in the wake of the Congress of Berlin and the well-travelled and highly educated author was probably challenging what he saw as the European view of Bulgaria as uncouth and backward.

The introduction of this character enabled

- consideration of national / cultural stereotyping
- examination of local patriotism
- review of the current relationship between Europe's 'great powers' and EC members that were once members of the Communist eastern bloc

Task: The Author - Who are we talking about?

- He was born on 1 January, 1863
- He was shot and killed on 23 May, 1897
- He was qualified in law
- He visited the USA and wrote a book called 'To Chicago and Back'
- His home in Svishtov is now a museum and it contains his preserved heart

Answer - Aleko Konstantinov

Task: Identify the character

- We meet a character in several of Konstantinov's short stories
- When we first meet him, he is a seller of rose oil and rugs
- However, he ends up involved in politics

What's his name?

Answer - Bay Ganyo

This section brings in a great deal that the children learn at school but explores the material from a variety of new perspectives.

Bay Ganyo is the embodiment of Bulgarian nationality and culture. If undertaking this workshop in, say, England, we would have chosen a character representative of little Britishness - Andy Cap perhaps. Andy is seen as an amalgam of the failings of the British working class.

Rationale:

Why are we using such a character? Answer - for its ambiguity. Imagine a British writer had created the character of Bay Ganyo or that Andy Cap had emerged from a Parisian imagination. Offensive? Probably.

This was a provocative method of guiding youngsters towards a consideration of European identity and the sillier aspects of nationalism without being overly direct.

Exploration of the Character

Task: Describe Bay Ganyo

- Use marker pens and the flipchart
- o Take turns
- o Use one word to describe the character

Let's think about Bay Ganyo for a few minutes

- o Why did Konstantinov create the character?
- Is Bay Ganyo a nice person?
- o Is Bay Ganyo a sort of metaphor?

Food for thought: Bay Ganyo has become a Bulgarian stereotype

From Peasantry

An interesting fact: In 1950, 85% of Bulgarians lived in small towns and villages.

To Politics

This is an indirect way of asking how much has changed since the 19th century and prompting a consideration of the continuing relevance of the metaphor.

Food for thought: This photo was taken by an American in 1923 and put in a school geography book



Question: Did this represent the 'real' Bulgaria?

The photo was taken within easy walking distance of fine examples of 19th century architecture including a royal palace. The kids are being encouraged to consider why the publisher chose this single image to represent Bulgaria. This led to a discussion of the two sides to Konstantinov's satire. How do Bulgarians see themselves? How do they think others see them?

Question: What is a stereotype?

Answer: A fixed general image or characteristic that many people believe to represent a particular type of person or thing.

Cultural stereotyping: When someone claims that members of another culture all share the same, often inferior or offensive characteristics.

Heaven and Hell

- o **Heaven** is where the police are British, the cooks are French, the mechanics are German, the lovers are Italian and it is all organised by the Swiss.
- 1. **Hell** is where the police are German, the cooks are English, the mechanics are French, the lovers are Swiss, and it is all organised by the Italians.

There follows a section designed to illustrate how racial groups or different cultures can be characterized and how the different characteristics dictate interaction. The EC needs to accommodate the different traits that are identified. The section seems to contain difficult vocabulary and sophisticated concepts. However, the various traits can be illustrated theatrically using 'soap opera' scenarios and the children can be invited to describe the behaviour portrayed in their own words.

Particularism Oooh - a big word!

This expression helps to explain a cultural trait and also how groups behave in relation to one another.

Universalism Oooh - another big word!

This is the opposite of Particularism

Definitions

Particularism: How you behave in a given situation depends on the circumstances. You treat family, friends, and your in-group the best you can, and you let the rest of the world take care of itself. Their in-groups will protect them. There

can't be absolute rules or principles because everything depends on whom you're dealing with. No one expects life to be fair. Exceptions will always be made for certain.

Universalism: Certain absolute rules or principles always apply, regardless of circumstances or the particular situation. Wherever possible, you should try to apply the same rules to everyone in similar situations. To be fair is to treat everyone alike and not make exceptions for family, friends, or members of your "in-group". Where possible, you should lay your personal feelings aside and look at the situation objectively. While life isn't necessarily fair, we can make it more fair by treating people the same way.

Universalism - Particularism

What is more important, rules or personal relationships?

People sometimes confuse this question with a different idea

Individualism - Collectivism

What is more important - the interests of each individual or those of the group?

Interesting fact: Individualists give most generously to charity. Collectivists don't really believe in it.

Definitions

Individualism

- Belief in the primary importance of the individual and in the virtues of self-reliance and personal independence.
- o A system based that promotes freedom from government regulation in the pursuit of a person's economic goals.
- A system that states that the interests of the individual should take precedence over the interests of the community.

Collectivism

In some places, from birth onwards, people enter strong, cohesive groups and must start working for the benefit of the group at an early age.

Collectivism is a term used to describe any moral, political, or social outlook, that stresses human interdependence and the importance of a strong group, rather than the importance of separate individuals.

As a political or economic theory, collectivism ensures that control over the production and distribution of food, clothing and other goods is undertaken on behalf of all the people. This usually means it's controlled by government.

Food for thought - Fons Trompenaars

This guy studied *business* culture all over the world. The behaviour of business people reflected the behaviour of the general public in any particular country.

He discovered that in some places, the culture was strongly particularist. In others it was universalist.

Those who were particularist were usually also collectivist.

In general, those countries that have had big industry and large cities the longest are the most

- Universalist
- Individualist

Corruption?

Particularism vs Universalism

Individualism vs Collectivism

The different cultures think that the opposite one is corrupt.

Discussion point



The EC promotes Universalism and a style of international Collectivism. There are countries in the EC that are very particularist according to Trompenaars. Powerful European countries believe in individualism and personal freedom.

Do you think it is possible to reconcile the differences?

Quiz: Universalism and Particularism

Below are sets of statements. There are four statements in each set. One statement does not belong in the set because it doesn't fit with the rest. Find the statements that don't belong.

A

1. Being objective - not letting personal feelings affect a decision - is possible and desirable.
2. You need to bend the rules once in a while.
3. A deal is a deal whatever happens.
4. The law is the law.

B

1. Principles are important and you shouldn't compromise.
2. Friends expect special treatment.
3. You need to be subjective - a decision depends on the circumstances.
4. The heart should rule the head.

C

1. People usually give jobs to their friends.
2. It is important to make decisions that are consistent.
3. Logic of the head is important.
4. Exceptions to the rules should be minimized.

D

1. Friends protect friends.
2. Life is neat and well-ordered, not messy.
3. Written contracts are not necessary, a handshake will do.

4. This attitude is consistent with collectivism.

E

1. Ethics depend on the situation.
2. Justice is blind - all people are equal under the law.
3. A deal is a deal - until circumstances change.
4. Don't trust strangers - they're not like us.

Quiz: Individualism and Collectivism

Here is a selection of statements. Mark those statements that are more collectivist with a "C" and those that are individualist with an "I"

Cooperation is better than competition.

Governments are a waste of time. We should get rid of them.

It is important to create a society in which all people are equal.

People should be free to own property.

If each individual is free, society is free.

A free market economy creates freedom and opportunity for everyone.

Total democracy is the best way to organize people.

It's important to have trade unions to represent the workers.

Money is the source of all evil.

Protecting the rights of the individual is more important than following community rules.

The above quizzes demand literacy and a fairly high level of reasoning skill. While working with less academically capable kids, you can explore the 2 pairs of contrasting concepts by play acting followed by discussion. They can be invited to provide other examples of the 4 concepts in action.

Scenario 1: Universalism and Particularism

Ivan's maths homework includes is identical to Sasho's. One has been copying from the other. The teacher confronts the pair.

Scenario 2: Individualism and Collectivism

In simple terms, two teachers discuss the respective virtues of strict academic streaming against 'comprehensive' education.

Food for thought: all groups use stereotypes to describe other groups

This is a type of collectivist behaviour but it is also individualist in a way.

Collectivist = *group* behaviour

Individualist = *one* group **separates** itself from *another*

Question: Why are stereotypes useful?

Food for thought: Bay Ganyo has his uses today. His name is often applied rudely to all Bulgarians except the one doing the talking."

Do you agree with this statement?

Game: Europe - cultural stereotypes

- Split into groups again.
- You will receive a number of short narratives that reflect cultural stereotypes.
- Can you match the stereotype to the country?

Example narrative: Germany

18 cans of Kaltenburg beer. Hurry please, I have to catch my bus at 10.03 and you know the buses are never late around here. No, don't wrap them - I will stick them in the special sausage-length pocket of my lederhosen (leather shorts)."



We provided a variety of other comic narratives with pictorial clues.

The entire section culminated in a return to the earlier questions -

Does it make sense to talk in terms of 'European culture'?

Discussion

How does the EC promote the idea of common identity?

Describe ways that EC countries act collectively?

Excursion across Europe

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls...

Introducing:

Bay Ganya



Bay Ganya has very kindly arranged a trip for us.

She will take us on a magical, mystery tour.....through Europe,,,,,crossing borders.....visiting beautiful cities...spending lots of stotinka

During each workshop, Bay Ganya was awarded with a sash and the title of Bulgarian tour leader of the year.

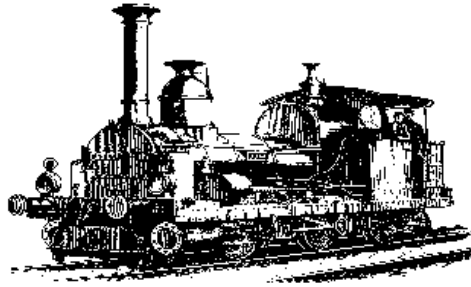
A four-day holiday

Are we traveling first class?



Nope!

We're going by train (Bay Ganya has shares in the Bulgarian railway company)



Thus begins an exploration of some practical issues relating to living, working and traveling in the EC.

Before departure, we must go shopping...

Split into your two teams

Team 1 - you are in charge of supplies - food and drink for the journey. Don't listen to advice from Bay Ganya!!!!

Team 2 - You choose Bulgarian souvenirs. Don't buy anything from Bay Ganya!!!!

We provided literature from Metro Cash 'n' Carry to help kids with their task. This helped raise a variety of issues -

- Metro is frequented every weekend by Romanians who come shopping in Bulgaria to take advantage of cheaper prices
- The journey is easy for the Romanians because of the simplification of border formalities
- Metro now takes Euros to make life easier for the Bulgarians
- Other retailers, restaurants etc now accept Euros and provide their literature in a variety of languages (Bucharest international airport is under 2 hours away from Ruse)
- Metro's selection of products isn't ideal for buying stuff representative of Bulgaria - the shop is German owner
- A number of foreign nationals now live in the vicinity of the city - how is this impacting on the region?

- Local infrastructure projects are under way with EC financial support

Chairs are laid out to represent a train complete with couchettes and the children embark on a journey designed to carry them to Brussels, the seat of the European parliament.

They have difficulty at the Serbian border.



Bay Ganya has forgotten to arrange visas and she is not carrying documents showing she has obtained parental consent to enable each child to take part in the trip.

The party retraces its steps to Ruse. Perhaps life will be easier if the journey is routed through Romania, a fellow member of the EC.



Task 1

We will pass through six countries and finish our journey in a seventh.

Can you identify them from their flags?

The flags are represented on handouts - the children write the name of the country beside the flag.

Countries: Romania, Hungary, Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, France, Belgium

Using a multimedia system, we showed a sequence of slides - images of the various countries. We played the national anthems and a parallel soundtrack made the noise of a steam engine. There's nothing wrong with being childish once in a while!

This section demands access to electronic equipment and we confess something would be lost without this technology.

We stopped in each country.

Task 2

Here is a giant sack. Can you find an object (or objects) relating to this country in the sack?

(The sack was full of bric-a-brac ranging from cuddly toys to wine boxes. Numerous exotic decoys were included to make the rummaging more fun)

Task 3

Some of the countries contain EU institutions. Which countries? Which institutions?

Brussels (Belgium)

European Commission

Council of Ministers

European Parliament

Luxembourg City (Luxembourg)

Court of Justice

Court of Auditors

European Parliament

European Parliament

Strasbourg (France)

European Parliament

Frankfurt (Germany)

European Central Bank

There is a variety of sources available from which to derive information about these institutions and the way in which they are interrelated. By way of example we made extensive use of a BBC website - www.bbc.co.uk

We did our best to enliven detail that is essentially dry with humour and to explain the different functions in terms the children could understand and with reference to Bulgaria eg

European Central Bank

The bank is responsible for setting interest rates among those countries that use the Euro. It also manages the rates of exchange between Euro and other currencies. The bank employs people from all the member states. Bay Ganya sent her CV four years ago and is still waiting for a reply.

Some additional institutions

European Economic and Social Committee

European Economic and Social Committee

European Ombudsman

This can lead to a discussion of the various areas of work eg economy, defence etc and a consideration of the EC's relationship with the rest of the world.

Europe and the Rest of the World

In the wake of discussion, why not take a risk. Go into the Internet, and make a random search of YouTube using narrative like "Europe and the USA", "Europe and the Far East". This will provide access to a body of satirical material that can be interpreted for the kids.

What point was being made in the clip?

Was the issue genuine and was the film being fair?

Etc. etc

Bulgaria in the EC

Next, we introduced the children to a website www.evropa.bg pertaining to the EC's relationship with Bulgaria.



The EU and Youth

Let's look at a website together.

It tells us something about the EU's attitude to the rights of young people.

Mr. Skateboarder dude has rights because the United Nations says so in the

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The EU members have a responsibility to act according to the convention

Together we looked at a document entitled 'You and the EU: Finding out more and having your say: The European Commission's Children's rights policy' (Plan, Save the Children, 2006).

A Big Task

While in Brussels, the kids met the EC commissioner responsible for Education, Training, Culture and Youth played by one of the EC team.



She gave a task to each team.

European City of Culture

Group 1 - Devise an itinerary for an EC delegation visiting your city for 2 days so as to interpret the cultural life of your community.

Group 2 - Design a symbol marking the election of your city as European City of Culture 2008.



EC delegates



Design in Progress



Finished Article

