



When the final agenda for our spring meeting in Gent was ready, the heading “7<sup>th</sup> MA EYS consortium meeting” made me suddenly pause in surprise. Could it really be so? If we add the two working meetings in Thessaloniki, the working seminar at the European Commission in Brussels, and our presentation Council of Europe Joint CDEJ/Advisory Council in Mollina, we arrive at a total of 11 working sessions in preparation for this project – not to mention all the work that everyone has invested between the meetings. At this point, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to some particular colleagues without whom it would have been utterly impossible to achieve the success that we celebrate today.

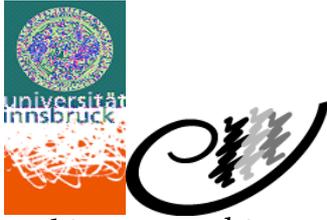
First and foremost, Yael Ohana has been a consistent tower of strength, commitment and persistence as administrative coordinator. She has invested far more than we have been able to recompense, and she *is* the project’s personified memory, much more so than *Sharepoint* can ever be.

Secondly, but no less importantly, without David Jenkins we would never have brought the curriculum specifications up to the mark in time for the LLP project to begin on a solid footing. He was prepared to place his incomparable experience in curriculum development and his wonderfully sharp and challenging thinking at our disposal, and to do so with no recompense at all apart from the opportunity to spend time with a group of diverse and usually amusing, but sometimes mutually frustrating, academics.

There is also someone in the background, who has never been able to come to our meetings because he has been too busy supporting me in building up my research group in Innsbruck and writing his own doctorate – which was submitted last week,

I am delighted to report. But his incredibly well-honed international-level strategic and project management expertise has been crucial for the success of our project: Helmut Fennes here in Innsbruck.

Most of you will also know that as members of my Innsbruck team, Klaus Reich, Petra Gigacher and, most recently, Katharina Lunardon have also contributed to



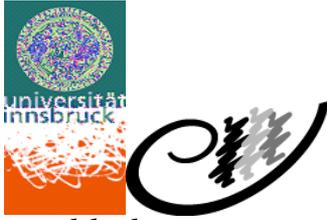
making everything possible in practice, both our funding applications and our meetings.

Finally and equally, I want to thank Ulrich Bunjes, Antje Rothemund, Hanjo Schild and their colleagues at the Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sports, who have solidly supported this project institutionally, politically and financially from the outset. The Council of Europe/European Commission Youth Partnership has been our key sponsor, but we have also received substantial funding from the Austrian Ministries of Science and Youth. The Universities of Luxembourg and Kuopio (Finland) have each sponsored a consortium meeting, and the University of Innsbruck's Research Vice-Rectorate and the International Office kindly gave co-funding for the meeting we held here in spring 2008.

But we should not forget that such initiatives need more than funding. If we were to add up the investment of time and expertise that consortium members have given over the past three years, then we would arrive at a sum that certainly exceeds the EU-LLP-Erasmus project grant we have now been awarded for the coming two years. In this sense, the universities we represent have together contributed significantly to the development of this project – and they are committed to continue to do so, both in kind and in funds.

With this meeting, we cross the border into a new and shared country: the MA European Youth Studies will take in its first student cohort in autumn 2011, and we all have a lot of work to do between now and then, for which we now have guaranteed funds. This prompts me to look back at the records of our inaugural meeting, held at the Council of Europe's European Youth Centre in Strasbourg on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2006.

The meeting agenda was all on one page – the agenda for the current meeting is four pages long. But the topics have not changed: curriculum, institutional hurdles, funding, workplan and consortium membership. We also calculated from the start that the project would always need a half-time administrative coordinator and that it

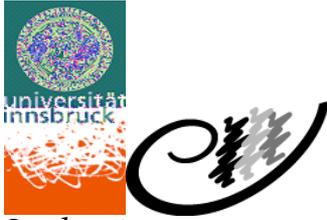


would always cost at least 30K Euro per year to keep the development project minimally afloat.

In the months prior to that meeting, I had already made an initial proposal to my university Rectorate to include the MA EYS as a new degree course under the Bologna architecture. The proposal managed to find a place as a future vision in a footnote – it was a toe in the door and that was good enough for me at the time. That proposal already foresaw an intake of 30 students each year and an open international recruitment for the course. It also made an explicit link between research and teaching: the MA EYS consortium is anchored in the leading figures in the field in European youth research, and it is coordinated from within a university research centre –Education, Generation and Life-course – that offers top-ranking research expertise and activity for the field at hand.

But amusingly, it suggested that the course would accept its first students by early 2007 and reported that in the 2006 negotiations with the Rectorate on the faculty's aims and objectives, we would ask for specialist lecturer posts to staff the development and implementation of the new degree. Perhaps we shall do so again .... ! And in our new university development plan, the MA EYS right in the heart of the text as a degree course we are committed to offer in two years' time.

At that first meeting in Strasbourg, it was Peter Lauritzen – then Head of the Youth Department at the Council of Europe, sadly no longer with us – who opened the discussion. He recalled that since the mid-1970s Breitenbach consensus, which had called for the integration of intercultural education and research into youth issues, there had been many initiatives, but none had been sustainable: partners had been unable to reach agreement; ideas were over-ambitious and unmanageable; embryonic projects had been under-resourced; key players were always too busy; and the knowledge and skills acquired in the courses offered by the institutional players – not least the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest – could not secure sufficient formal recognition in the field.



So the time was more than ripe for the MA EYS project in all respects. Education, Peter Lauritzen argued, is the way to foster a European critical space for debate. The university partners bring innovative power – as critical thinkers and actors – and infrastructural support – through their universities. The European-level partners can make the policy case – within their respective organisations and channels – and can provide a degree of practical support for the project’s development and implementation.

For someone whose professional life had been passionately committed to the development of the youth field in education and research terms, the MA EYS project was thus a significant step forward. He saw three intersecting issues as setting its frame:

- the professionalization agenda – quality assurance and the recognition of non-formal learning;
- the democracy agenda – profiling active democratic citizenship as a combined teaching and research issue;
- the pedagogic agenda – realising communicative competence in a learning culture of discursive dialogue.

He saw the MA EYS as a potential model of good practice in 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education. In doing so, he presented us with an enormous and worthwhile challenge. The meeting minutes record our firm conclusion that the MA EYS is *not* a professional training course, but much more “essentially an opportunity for an enhanced personal journey in youth studies at a European level”. We would express this in German – for it cannot be so expressed in other languages – as a postgraduate degree course that is embedded in the concept and practice of *Bildung* [education] for a specialised field of research and action. As Hanjo Schild later remarked in an Email to me: “Peter reported that the Saturday meeting was very successful – many thanks for taking this initiative!”

What more is there to say, except to thank you all for joining me on this journey and never failing to believe in and work towards the aims we set for ourselves three years



ago. We are now safely on the road to our new country and I know that we will continue to enjoy the journey in front of us. Let's get cracking.

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