

“ The Wonderland “

*Multilateral Youth Exchange
Oradea, 16-23 August 2007*

Description of youth participation project

Youth participation is the active involvement of children and young people in public life (decision-making and social activities).

Name of project: “The Wonderland”

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Executive organisation

Name of organisation: Oradea Municipality, Social Community Administration Oradea
Type of organisation: public authority
Website: www.asco-oradea.ro
Additional information: -

Project description

The project provides a solution to the following question/problem:

The universe of Wonderland, the same like in Lewis Carroll's book, Alice in Wonderland, shows that the unknown and the ununderstandable can be familiar, logic and funny, too. If Alice can pace through this world, live in it and make friends, than everything is possible. By similar approach, our imagination can pass beyond the actual world's limits, beyond the mathematical definition of local or national “comune law”, that can sometime turn into stereotypes and this stereotypes can turn sometimes into biases. This kind of spirit brings the young people with disability who participate to this youth exchange named Wonderland. They see the world, the European community as a Wonderland where they want to approach with interest, curiosity, hope, but moreover friendship, all these together with their try to surpass any physical, social or cultural barrier that blocks their way towards community, to their friends and their willing to participate to community. Therefore, “the camp” of Wonderland took place in Oradea - a multilateral youth exchange with young people from Spain, France, Italy and Romania.

Project idea conceived by:

Project idea conceived by the Asociația Deficienților Locomotori Oradea (Association for Physically Disabled) and Oradea Social Community Administration

Partners: Intereuropa Rioja – Spain, Cemea del Mezzogiorno onlus – Italy, Federation des Oeuvres Laiques de Saone et Lioire – France, Asociatia Deficientilor Locomotori (Association for Physically Disabled) in partnership with Oradea Social Community Administration

Date started:
august 16th 2007

Date of completion:
august 23rd 2007

Targets:

- To promote young people`s active citizenship in general and their European citizenship in particular
- To contribute in developing the quality of support systems for youth activities and the capabilities of civil society organisations in the youth field
- To promote European cooperation in the youth field.

Target group: 22 disabled young people from Italy, Spain, France and Romania.

The project reached: 22 young people.

Working method: (for example, *making an inventory of the needs of young people in the community, communicating policies, organising a workshop, attracting youth and senior officials to the workshop, conducting the workshop, linking youth and senior officials with future plans, etc.*)

The Wonderland youth exchange theme is intercultural exploring on integration and equal changes potential of Europe provided for disabled young people. This wonderland will be explored with nonformal educational tool, in order to achieve better and friendlier environment for disabled people.

All participants were involved in all project process and for this reason the objectives of the exchange start to be implemented for the very beginning of the project.

How are young people involved?

The youth exchange was designed as a tool for direct involvement of participants., because the issue is coming from their direct need, the social problems they are facing, the disability and life management in Europe as person with disability. All the participants were involved in all the activities beginning with the preparation, by deciding the period, discussing the program interest and content, suggesting and preparing the materials for the exchange, agreeing group policy and group responsibilities. All aspects of involvement are linked to the philosophy of the exchange, to motivate the participant to be active involved in this Wonderland exploration by using nonformal educational tools.

They were involved in all the activities: team building games, travel and exploring, preparing a present for a friend, preparing for the carnival, making the documentation materials: web page, the exchange personal diary and Wonderland Magazine, the video mix, canteen administration (where they helped in serving and cleaning the dishes in the teams)

What is the role of young people?

Their role was to take charge of the actions that had to be done, to make his/her own handicraft product, the costumes for the carnival, documentation for the web and magazine dedicated to the project, they established together with their coordinators, the aim of the project and presented their hopes and expectations regarding the exchange program

How many young people participated?

33 young people participated (out of which 11 coordinators)

How many young people were involved in the organisation of the project?

22 young people with disabilities, 11 coordinators and 4 volunteers

What was the role of the executive organisation?

Asociatia Deficientilor Locomotori Bihor in partnership with Oradea Social Community Administration

What other organisations were involved?

Asociatia Deficientilor Locomotori Bihor – Oradea, Romania, Administratia Sociala Comunitara Oradea, Romania, Inter Europa Rioja – Spain, Cemea del Mezzogiorno Onius – Italy, Federation des Oeuvres Laiques de Saone et Loire - France

FINANCE**What is the budget?**

18,276 euro

Who provided the finances?

“Youth in Action Programme – application for Action 1-Youth for Europe, 1.1 Youth Exchanges
Municipality of Oradea- transportation and meals

OUTCOME**Have the targets been achieved?**

Yes, the activities of the project show the community that is invited to interact with the disabled young people, by accepting their values and role in the society. The integration process is concentrated on active involvement, more than on tolerance.

What were the success factors?

The web site and magazine were the products of the exchange, but most of all were the close relationships built between the young people in the 4 countries.

What were the pitfalls?

Even though the weather was fine, there was a slight delay on the first day of the project, but it had no further effect on the activities.

Future plans:

We want this project to be the first step towards a long lasting collaboration between the four groups, and other such events to follow.

Quotes and opinions of young people:

"They're just regular people..."

by Italian group

"When I told everyone that I was about to go to Romania for an exchange for mentally disabled people, I really didn't expect all those looks from my friends and family. First of all, since I've never had an experience in that field, they were all "Oh, come on, it's too hard for you, you will never gonna like it, you're gonna come back home after 2 days". Plus, they were pretty skeptic about Romania. I didn't have any holidays that summer, my skin I was very happy about it because the whole experience was amazing, kind of life-changing for me. When you're about to do something, you always guess in your head how's it gonna be like: I have to admit that I never thought I would end up liking this experience so much! The guys that participated to the exchange were amazing: when you have to deal for the first time with "special" people you always think "how can I help them?" or "what do they need?" and that's a big mistake, especially if you are a youth leader. After spending 5 minutes with them I understood that they DIDN'T need to be helped, and they DIDN'T need me to do anything. They're just regular people, and the best thing you can do is enjoying every minute spent together and have fun with them. And we all did. We did a lot of things together: we created masks, we learned how to juggle, we made costumes, we even put on a show! And everybody gave his own strong contribute to the final product. We also visited a lot of interesting things, and I gotta say that Romania is a very beautiful country. Oradea, the city where we stayed, is very interesting and full of monuments, orthodox and greek-catholic churches, parks. The mountain region of Bihor has a great natural landscape and to walk around the houses it's like making a trip in the past. And of course also Romania by night was so cool: nice clubs and very cheap drinks! :). The Romanian hosting team, but also the Romanians in general, were the kindest and best people ever. I actually wish the experience lasted a little longer to get to know them better, but who knows, maybe there will be more projects to come!"was very white and my relatives had invited me to go to Calabria to visit them and enjoy the sea. "How can you prefer Romania to Calabria?!". And also there was this subtle thing in the air that nobody wanted to say in order to not give a narrow-minded image of himself: Romania is dangerous, you gotta be careful to your wallet, and some few more absurd things. Of course these things didn't make me change my mind at all.

Any other remarks:

- the project fosters young people's sense of European citizenship and helps them to understand their role as part of the present and future of Europe
- the project activities promote European values such as: equal opportunities, human rights and democracy respect for other cultures.
- www.thewonderland.3x.ro