

EUROPEAN RAILS OF PEACE (EU.R.O.PE)

A collaborative initiative: The Glocal Forum and *Viaggi e Libertà* (Travels and Freedom), in partnership with Agenzia Nazionale per i Giovani and European Commission – DG Education and Culture, Youth in Action Programme and the support of public-private partners, including: Eurail Group G.I.E., the Council of Europe, Intesa Sanpaolo, Trenitalia, the Cities of Siena, Rome and Brussels.



Third Project Edition - Report of Activities

July 14 – August 12, 2008

Purpose

The aim of this document is to report the activities and outcomes of the third edition of the European Rails of Peace (EU.R.O.PE) project, which took place between July 14 and August 12, 2008 to its main partners and to disseminate the results to further contacts and new potential partners. The document briefly outlines the background and the objectives of the Project, then summarizes the Project components and the activities carried out from June 14 to August 12, 2008, while presenting Project outcomes and follow up.

Background

In the past decade, Former Yugoslavia went through a sequence of painful civil wars, which destroyed the economy, the cultural systems, and the life of the region. Currently there is no active conflict in the area, but the roots and aftermaths of past wars need to be addressed in order to prevent any risk of possible recurrence of violence.

The failure of the talks run by the European Union, Russia and the United States about the definition of the status of Kosovo and the unrest triggered by Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence earlier this year raised further political tensions particularly affecting the younger Balkan generations. Youth in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia, even those with the best education, still today find their lives constrained by the effects of war, such as political instability, mobility limitations and rampant unemployment. For them it is difficult to obtain visas to travel through Europe or even to cross their neighbors' borders. The vast majority have never left their country, and many do not have a passport. Representing the majority of the Balkan population, young people are eager to escape the cycle of conflict and ensure a prosperous future for a new generation, but need opportunities to build their capacity in order to do so.

Since its first EU.R.O.PE project edition in 2006, the project has reached 150 students from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia, including a number of youth from Belgium and Italy. The youth were encouraged to become ambassadors of peace and engines of change in their communities, while facilitating interethnic dialogue and cultural exchanges across historical divides.

Building on the 2008 – European Year of Intercultural Dialogue and believing in the importance that learning, travelling and sharing experiences together can play as socially cohesive forces and to educate youth to understand and respect diversity, last summer for the third consecutive year the EU.R.O.PE project succeeded to provide opportunities for young people from different Balkan and European communities to socialize, express themselves individually and collaboratively and promote the cause of interethnic dialogue, reconciliation, and European awareness.

Project Activities

The different Project components were designed to enable young people from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds to meet, share experiences, discuss how to overcome stereotypes and prejudices, and develop alternative possibilities for regional and international cooperation. Key Project components are:

Component 1) Preparation

Building on the strong relations between the organizers, The Glocal Forum and *Viaggi e Libertà*, and their good cooperation with the Research and Documentation Center of Sarajevo, Kontra and AEGEE Leuven, as well as with the supporters of past Project editions, between February and July 2008 the partners were closely in touch to coordinate the preparation works, including project advertisement, fundraising, contacts with the relevant municipalities and with new potential partners, drafting the agenda of activities, and defining responsibilities and timelines, coordination and logistics.

Calls for applications in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Italy and Belgium were publicized with the support of the local partners and in coordination with the relevant Municipalities between April and June 2008. Finally, forty-six youth were selected to participate in EU.R.O.PE 2008 on the basis of their student status, age 18-25, commitment towards peacebuilding and reconciliation, and active involvement in local youth organizations and projects.

Component 2) Peacebuilding Training

Every EU.R.O.PE edition features a series of training activities in a number of European cities, which have provided their availability to host the project.

In the **first edition** in summer 2006, two workshops were organised in Vienna and Rome, hosted by the respective Municipalities. The Vienna workshop on peacebuilding and conflict resolution took place at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. The workshop was moderated by Ms. Marijana Grandits, Director of the Working Table I at the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, with the participation of Mr. Werner Senfter from the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Andreas Schieder, Member of Vienna City Parliament, and Amb. Lamberto Zannier, at the time Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Vienna, and currently Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The following workshop in Rome was hosted by the Municipality at the City Hall. Councillor Lia Di Rienzo, representing Mayor Walter Veltroni, opened the session and offered Rome's enthusiastic support for the continuation of the project.

In the **second edition** in summer 2007 the training component was expanded to include a workshop in the City of Siena. The first workshop in Vienna focused on the topic: Regional Cooperation, Memory and Reconciliation. Among the participants were: Ambassador Jiri Grusa, Director of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna; Mr Lothar Fischmann from the Office of City Councillor Rudi Schicker, City of Vienna; Mr. Thomas Schnoell, Head of Unit for South-Eastern Europe, Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs; Ms. Marijana Grandits, Director Working Table I, Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe; and Mr. Srdjan Cvijic, Expert for Democratization and Human Rights, Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. In Rome the Municipality hosted a

discussion on cultural heritage and national identity at the House of Memory and History in Trastevere. In Siena, the “Balkan Routes of Peace” workshop hosted by the Municipality featured a welcome message from the Vice-Mayor Marzucchi and a roundtable on media in the Balkans, including Mr. Lorenzo Garibaldi, Councilor for Peace and International Cooperation of the City of Siena; Mr Francesco Andreini, President of the Centro Gabrio Avanzati; Mr. Davide Sighele, Editor, Osservatorio sui Balcani; Mr. Jean Arnault Deréns, Editor, Le Courier des Balkans; and Ms. Viola Rosita, Director, Consorzio Italiano di Solidarietà (ICS).



The **third EU.R.O.PE edition** in summer 2008 was characterized by a number of non-formal education activities, planned to facilitate the participants' personal and social development. Working methods included: team-building activities and role games; interactive debates, interviews; working groups; group outdoor activities to facilitate socialization with the population of the hosting cities; meetings and debates with EU officials, municipal representatives and experts to develop constructive reflections on project themes.

The opening of the 2008 project activities took place in Rome on July 15. Upon arrival, the students gathered in the prestigious *Sala del Carroccio* at the Rome City Hall, *The Campidoglio*, to be welcomed by Ms Laura Marsilio, Councillor for Education, Family and Youth Policies at the Municipality of Rome. Ice-breaker activities were then run by Critical Mass, a Dutch organization working to provide young people with practical skills to understand conflict dynamics. Any apprehension the participants may have had for encountering other youth from across historical conflict divides was quickly overcome through entertaining team-building and problem-solving activities. The students were united into diverse groups and worked together to create skits and solve creative tasks related to people-to-people perceptions.

The following day, participants were joined by American students from the Lorenzo de' Medici School in Rome in a number of activities that encouraged the youth to explore in detail their conceptions of stereotypes and prejudice. One of the main differences of this year's edition of the European Rails of Peace was the involvement of a component of non-Balkan youth in the training activities. Not only was this new element advantageous for the presence of neutral peers in workshops dealing with sensitive issues and members of community previously engaged in conflict. The European and American students were also able to benefit by learning from first-hand exposure to the situation in the Balkans, an area geographically so close to the European Union, but not enough known yet.

The City of Siena for the second consecutive year marked an important stop on the trip on July 17-18. Mr. Carlo Infantino, Head of the International Relations Office, City of Siena and Mr. Francesco Andreini, President, Gabrio Avanzati Center opened the session and welcomed the participants. A workshop on politics and society in the Balkans then developed, run by Mr. Srdjan Cvijic, Expert for Democratization and Human Rights of the former Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, followed by a specific workshop on project planning and implementation run by Mr Guido Orlandini, Secretary General, The Intercultural Communication and Leadership School (ICLS). The first workshop facilitated by Mr Cvijic provided the youth with a venue to exchange opinions and openly discuss while the project facilitator posed questions on a number of issues regarding Balkan's most recent history, including references to former leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army, Ramush Haradinaj and the recently arrested former Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadžić. Through the workshop, the participants were encouraged to actively participate and discuss their different points of view, while being open to respectfully listen to the opinion of the others and their different background of experiences. "I came here with very clear and straight opinions regarding the political situation in the Balkans. Thank you for having confused me," said one Kosovar student after the workshops, "I haven't necessarily changed my ideas, but I've certainly questioned them and I think that's a good thing."

The following workshop in Siena was run by Mr Guido Orlandini, Secretary General, The Intercultural Communication and Leadership School (ICLS) and dealt with project planning, from design to implementation. At the end, the participants were encouraged to split in working groups to draft project ideas. As a result, proposals were created about facilitating an exchange involving young European Union citizens, who would travel to the Balkans in order to get to know the region and its different cultures and communities. Such an experience would help increase the understanding of the recent historical events, while building on the personal contacts and relations already established during the EU.R.O.PE project. Proposals were also developed for: establishing a drama group composed of students from post-conflict countries who would work at Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet play; establishing youth exchanges involving youth and their families from post-conflict communities; and establishing an intercultural handicraft training project involving young people from Balkans, MENA and Western Europe.

In Leuven the students took another look at cultural conflict as they took to the streets in groups "armed" with videocameras to interview people, hear and then report back to all of the participants first-hand accounts of the non-violent but still hard political conflict between French and Dutch speaking Belgians. Facilitated by Critical Mass, the workshop aimed to get the participants familiar with other conflict cases. Working on an issue which was external from the Balkan conflict but close to the group of the participants from Belgium facilitated cooperation among the Balkan and European youth as well as a deeper analysis and discussion on conflict dynamics. The youth were encouraged to use multiple outlets of expression and present the outcomes of their research in front of all the participants. At the end of the outdoor activities, they were asked to split in different groups and to construct a number of installations that illustrated their EU.R.O.PE experience so far. A group of participants assembled a machine that expressed how their stereotypes and personal attitudes had been affected by the project experience. Starting with photos of how Muslim are normally pictured, the installation represented project encounters and experiences as inputs producing outputs, while bringing to a

new image – that of their young Muslim travel partners - quite different from their original stereotyped idea.

On July 22 in Brussels the participants had the chance to visit the European Commission and to be introduced by Mr Ralf Von Ameln, member of the Speakers' Team, to the structure and the tasks of the European Union and its decision making processes. Furthermore, the participants had the chance to meet and discuss with Mr. Martin Harvey, International Relations Officer, Directorate "Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo Issues", Directorate-General for Enlargement. Also in the light of the arrest that night of former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, who was accused of ordering the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995, the participants discussed with Mr. Harvey the foreseen next steps in the relations between the European Union and the countries in the Western Balkans, including future developments in visa Schengen regimes, and the different strategies regarding the enlargement of the European Union towards the various countries in Western Balkans. Finally, certificates of participation to the project were distributed to all the participants. Following the activities at the European Commission, the participants were then welcomed by municipal officials at the beautiful City Hall of Brussels. The event at the Municipality represented the closure of the workshops phase, before the start of the travelling for peace component.

Component 3) Peacebuilding and Travelling through Europe

Travelling represents a relevant component of the Project, by allowing the participants to get them to know each other, develop friendly relations, make common travel plans, broaden their perspectives, and develop their own experience of Europe. A period of one month travel by train through Europe was split into a first trip phase organized by the Project coordinators for the full group attending the workshops, and a second follow up phase of free trip in mixed groups. For this purpose, the youth were provided with a travel package including: Shengen visas; Inter-Rail Global passes; Accor vouchers; Thomas Cook "Europe by Rail" Travel guides and Thomas Cook Train timetables; Hostelling International membership cards; bonuses for accommodation in Italian, French and German Hostelling International (AIG, FUAJ and DJH) youth hostels; and ISIC – International Student Identity Cards.

Component 4) Publication and dissemination

- An e-mailing list, a website (www.europeanrailsofpeace.eu) including a travel blog, and a "European Rails of Peace" and "European Rails of Peace 2008" Facebook groups (www.facebook.com) were created to facilitate contacts and communication between all participants, including those from previous project editions.
- Press releases were produced at Project launch and Project completion.
- MTV Italy (www.mtv.it) launched the European Rails of peace project on its Flash news on July 15.
- During the stop in Siena on July 17-18, 2008 the Municipality recorded interviews of participants presenting their views about the Project and other issues related to the social and political situation in their region.
- A series of reports about the activities taking place in the framework of Project Component 2 will be produced by Europocket.tv (<http://europocket.tv/>), which sent a reporter to follow the group during the first week of activities. Europocket.tv had already recorded short interviews in Vienna during the second edition of the European Rails of Peace project in 2007. The first

videos produced by Europocket.tv are already published on europocket.tv/, www.youtube.com and www.facebook.com at the “European Rails of Peace 2008 group.

- Further short movies will be made available by the young Belgian film maker Wouter Lismont and Critical Mass.
- Articles about Project edition 2008 were published on the Italian newspapers: “La Nazione” in Siena and “Il Manifesto” in Florence, and on the web - in 6 languages - on websites such as: www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu; www.radio.rai.it; www.glieuros.eu; www.regione.toscana.it; www.intoscana.it; www.welfareitalia.it; portalino.org/balkans; summer.unric.org; www.criticalmass.nu/en/; idc.org.ba; www.kontraweb.net; www.eurailgroup.com; www.developmentgateway.org; www.htrends.com; it.notizie.yahoo.com; www.prnewswire.co.uk; www.youth.rs; www.immediapress.it; www.comunicati-stampa.info; www.marketpress.net; www.serwisturystyczny.pap.pl; www.journalist-association.eu. The Project will be also presented at the upcoming fifth edition of the “Fuorirotta” festival in Udine, Italy, next November. “Fuorirotta” had already given visibility to the second Project edition last year.



Working methods

Calls for applications in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Italy and Belgium were publicized with the support of the local partners and in coordination with the relevant Municipalities between April and June 2008.

Selections were carried out by local partner organizations – The Research and Documentation Center of Sarajevo, Kontra and AEGEE Leuven – with the involvement of a number of former project participants and the young delegates from Belgrade, Pristina and Sarajevo of the Glocal Youth Parliament (GYP) - the world youth network of The Glocal Forum - in coordination with the relevant Municipalities. The call for applications were advertised through a number of local schools and youth websites in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Italy and Belgium.

Forty-six youth, composed of 26 from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia and 20 from Italy and Belgium were then selected to participate in EU.R.O.PE 2008 on the basis of their student status, age 18-25, commitment towards peacebuilding and interethnic dialogue and active involvement in local youth organizations and projects. The selection was carried out according to the gender balance criteria. With the completion of the third Project edition on August 12, 2008,

EU.R.O.PE has succeeded to reach a total of one hundred and fifty students from Western Balkans, including a number of Italians and Belgians.

In parallel, partnerships were developed to support the Project. The main funding for the third edition came from Agenzia Nazionale per i Giovani and European Commission – DG Education and Culture, Youth in Action Programme. Other contributions were provided by Eurail Group G.I.E. and Council of Europe; Municipality of Siena; Intesa Sanpaolo. Among the other supporters: Trenitalia; Municipalities of Rome and Brussels; UNMIK - United Nations Mission in Kosovo; European Office/Jean Monnet Chair, University of Rome Tor Vergata; Associazione Italiana Alberghi per la Gioventù (AIG); Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse (FUAJ); Thomas Cook Publishing; Accor Services; Die Jugendherbergen Hauptverband (DJH); Critical Mass; AEGEE Leuven; Lorenzo de' Medici School; Europocket.tv; The Intercultural Communication and Leadership School (ICLS); The World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation; The Research and Documentation Center in Sarajevo; Kontra; Adriano Olivetti Foundation.

Such a public-private coalition represented a fundamental contribute to effectively implement the training activities in Rome, Siena, Leuven and Brussels as well as to provide the sponsorships necessary for the Peacebuilding and Travelling component, including train (InterRail Global) passes, Shengen visas, Thomas Cook travel guides, ISIC cards, and bonuses for accommodation and meals while travelling trough Europe.

Outcomes

The Project activities were very successful and had great impact on the participants, by enabling young students to share their perspectives with peers from communities previously engaged in conflict as well as by offering a chance for Balkan and European youth to meet and interact. The participants had the chance to express their opinions about sensitive topics such as: prejudices and stereotypes, memory and reconciliation, the role of media, while debating such issues with their peers and with relevant experts. At the same time, cross-cutting personal relations and friendship among members of the various groups were developed thanks to the Peacebuilding and Travelling component, which allowed for socializing and sharing travel plans and positive experiences together.

Among the specific project outcomes:

- Personal relations established among youth from different ethnic communities: Bosnian youths from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and from the Republika Srpska; Walloon and Flemish Belgians; Albanians from Kosovo; Serbians and Italians.
- Enhanced the personal development of the participants through this enriching and rare experience, also considering the mobility limitations affecting the Balkan participants.
- Increased team-building and networking skills and critical constructive thinking through interactive debates, working groups, role games, and interviews to help overcome political and social divides and develop friendly relations and work cooperation.
- Increased awareness and understanding of the European participants about the political and social situation in Western Balkans;

- By meeting with EU officials and city representatives, youth's voices heard at the political level on issues such as visa regimes and mobility barriers affecting Balkan citizens while travelling to Europe and to neighboring countries;
- Facilitated access to otherwise hard-to-come-by resources and travel opportunities for Balkan citizens, many of which have never travelled outside their countries;
- Awareness raised in the local communities and added value provided by coordinating the Project activities with the relevant Municipalities, such as Brussels, Siena, Belgrade, Pristina and Sarajevo;
- Creation of draft follow up proposals as multipliers to implement further initiatives in the Balkans and in the European Union;
- Creation of a number of videos about the project, made available by: Europocket.tv; Municipality of Siena; Critical Mass; and a young independent Belgian film maker.



Partners

The Project would not have been possible without the tremendous support of Project partners, in particular: Agenzia Nazionale per i Giovani and European Commission – DG Education and Culture, Youth in Action Programme; Eurail Group G.I.E. and Council of Europe – Solidarity Fund for Youth Mobility; Municipality of Siena; Intesa Sanpaolo. Furthermore: Trenitalia; UNMIK - United Nations Mission in Kosovo; Municipalities of Rome and Brussels; European Office/Jean Monnet Chair, University of Tor Vergata; Associazione Italiana Alberghi per la Gioventù (AIG); Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse (FUAJ); Thomas Cook Publishing; Accor Services; Die Jugendherbergen Hauptverband (DJH); Critical Mass; AEGEE Leuven; Lorenzo de' Medici School; Europocket.tv; The Intercultural Communication and Leadership School (ICLS); The World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation; The Research and Documentation Center in Sarajevo; Kontra; Adriano Olivetti Foundation.

The Glocal Forum and Viaggi e Libertà are extremely grateful to all stakeholders for this joint effort, as it underlines the amazing value and strength of meaningful collaborations built to achieve the common goal of youth cooperation and intercultural dialogue.

Final Remarks

The Project was a great success, in particular thanks to the alliance of local governments, private sector companies, NGOs and international institutions involved, and to the dynamic nature of the different Project components. European Rails of Peace provided young people from South-Eastern Europe and from the European Union with venues to meet and share experiences, express their perspectives and connect to their peers from different ethnic communities. The opportunity for young Italians and Belgians to learn from different points of view about the political and social situation in the Balkans; the possibility for Balkan students to meet with their peers from communities previously engaged in conflict and work together with the help of facilitators and experts; the chance for such an intercultural and diverse group to meet and make contacts, work together and make common travel plans had a true impact in building the confidence and trust of young people towards their peers, thus encouraging participants to take action in building a peaceful and respectful coexistence for local communities.

The Glocal Forum in cooperation with *Viaggi e Libertà*, which works since years to promote free youth mobility and sustainable tourism, was uniquely positioned to implement this project, which leverages simultaneously on many of its strategic objectives and programs. The Glocal Forum is in fact devoted to peacebuilding and development through a decentralized city-to-city approach to international cooperation, while facilitating initiatives for peace and development that associate young citizens, local governments, private sector and international institutions. Building on its worldwide networks of cities and of youth (the Glocal Youth Parliament - GYP), the Glocal Forum encourages young citizens to take an active role in their communities and institutions and facilitates the development of strategic corporate social responsibility activities by creating public-private partnerships to support peace and development projects.



Given the still unstable political and social situation in the Balkans and the need to continue to support the reconciliation process in the Balkans, and in the light of the success of past project editions, we already received proposals from a number of partners regarding an upcoming Fourth EU.R.O.PE Project edition. Also in the light of the good feedbacks from Project participants, we believe that the Project has a full potential to be replicated once more in summer 2009.

Furthermore, in the framework of the workshops draft proposals were created by the participants about implementing youth exchanges. In particular, it was proposed that a number of youth from the European Union would travel to the Balkans in order to visit the region and experience its different cultures and communities. Further proposals were also developed for exchanges involving youth and their families from post-conflict communities; for establishing a drama group composed of students from post-conflict countries; and for creating an intercultural handicraft training project involving young people from the Balkan, MENA and Western Europe regions. Finally, a proposal was drafted to develop media workshops aimed at empowering youth to better understand media's impact on the society, while learning how to use them to promote peace and active citizenship through responsible information and communication.

Finally, between the end of year 2008 and the beginning of year 2009 we will work to implement local initiatives involving the participants to the third as well as to the previous Project editions, in order to disseminate information and talk about their Project experience in school and youth centers in the various communities. In parallel, we will continue to build relevant partnerships and we will share the experience of the first three Project editions with our contacts, including Mayors, international organizations, NGOs and public and private sector companies. Also in the framework of the next Glocalization Conferences and at other international meetings we will work with the aim to give continuity and expand this successful initiative over the next months and years.

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