

## **Report on InterCity Youth 2014 's-Hertogenbosch**

From Sunday November 9th until Tuesday November 11th 2014 the municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch (Netherlands) organized the third InterCity Youth conference. The conference was a continuation of InterCity Youth 2012 in Leipzig and InterCity Youth 2013 in Helsinki.

The InterCity-conferences are supported by the European programme Erasmus plus and Youth in Action and will be a contribution to the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy.

The conference was held for heads of departments of local or regional authorities responsible for youth work. There were 50 participants from 20 different European countries.

The conference started with the official founding of a European network. The programme was organized together with European and Dutch partners and the last day was a common programme with Dutch participants.

The theme of the conference was: Managing innovation in youth work.

All relevant information can be found on [www.intercityyouth.eu](http://www.intercityyouth.eu).

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### **1. Background of InterCity Youth 2014**

In October 2012 on behalf of Jugend für Europa the first InterCity-conference was held. The aim was to bring municipalities in Europe together and to offer a platform for exchange and mutual learning on the topic of youth work. The idea was born to establish a European network of local departments for youth work to give permanence to this form of cooperation and mutual learning.

During the second InterCity-conference in December 2013 in Helsinki/Finland the network idea was concretized and further developed.

In November 2014 during the third InterCity-conference in 's-Hertogenbosch the network was officially founded. Gothenburg offered to host the fourth InterCity-conference in 2015.

### **2. Programme**

Enclosed is a detailed programme.

In addition, we give a short impression of parts of the programme.

#### **2.1 Sunday 14.30 – 16.00 Start of the network**

Jonas Agdur gave a short introduction on backgrounds, goals and structure of het InterCity Youth (ICY) network. The network offers a chance to have a common voice. The structure will be presented in the first Board Meeting. There is an annual fee of € 500, the same fee for both municipalities and networks in order to stimulate network building on the national level.

12 representatives of municipalities or networks signed the “Declaration of intent to establish the InterCity Youth network”. The signed document is enclosed. The municipalities of Munich (Germany), Dublin (Ireland) and Leeuwarden (The Netherlands) recently put forward for membership of ICY.

## 2.2 Sunday 15.30 – 18.15 Youth work and culture

**Mr. Jan Jansen**, *project leader at the local Community College for senior vocational training Koning Willem I College* talks about the regional programme TechXperience. In this programme technology and education work together to not only prepare young people for the labour market but also to stimulate problem solving and creative thinking. The combination of creativity and technology is a good one. An example is the exhibition in the Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art (SM’S) where pieces from a Flower Parade show the need for technical skills in the making of art.

After this, we walk to the museum where we get a short impression of the exhibition (Night Catch). Then we listen to **mrs. Ulla Laurio** in the museum’s Auditorium. *Ulla Laurio is head of the youth department of the city of Helsinki*. In the local youth centres cultural youth work programmes are performed.

Ulla gives three examples of “how and why art works”. She tells about the Tullaamo project in 2013 where a number of 16-year-olds, together with artists and youth workers, made art as a tool to experience life. They found a way to express the inner vision and made it concrete in an old industrial building. There were also projects for graffiti, in which graffiti was recognised as a form of art and young people gained responsibility for 14 wall for legal graffiti and a project in which young people made 150 tables which were given to the city.

Ulla stressed the necessary technical skills, developing personal skills and the need for an encouraging environment.

## 2.3 Monday 9.00 – 12.00. Speakers on the value and identity of youth work

### **Mr. Ton Rombouts**

*Mayor of the municipality of ‘s-Hertogenbosch and chairman of the international delegation of the Dutch Association of Local Governments (VNG).*

Mr. Rombouts stressed the importance of local investments in culture, sports and education for young people. The future of youth in Europe is an important issue. Local authorities can contribute enormously to the positive development of young people. On long term these efforts will result in an economically prosperous and safe city.

Youth work has an important task to find young people, connect with what interests them and with what they need. And very important: work with them, not work for them. This is what we call participation.

We challenge young people to participate in society. By giving them space. Sometimes literally; by providing them with a place, a youth center. But always by giving them support, by giving confidence, by encouraging them, by giving them opportunities to find out which talents they have. Or have not. Learning is also a process of trying, failing sometimes, and getting a second chance, and a third, and fourth. This is the only way young people can develop their talents. Europe has an important task in this respect and it takes combined efforts to reach our goals.

In ‘s-Hertogenbosch we try to give young people space. For example in facilitating them to organize a youth festival or to literally create space for creative activities like graffiti.

### **Mr. Martin van Rijn**

*State Secretary of the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (VWS).*

Mr. Van Rijn speaks about the reform of youth policy in the Netherlands and how it will affect those working in the field, especially at the local level. A new Youth Act comes into force on 1 January next year. The government’s objective is to improve cooperation between the various organizations and staff involved in youth work and welfare services for young people, responsibility for which is being

passed to the local authorities, or 'municipalities'. In future, the municipality will oversee and coordinate all aspects of youth policy, from general measures and facilities to specialist residential care. While Dutch municipalities have long been responsible for general youth work and welfare, the more specialist forms of support are now being added to their portfolio.

The involvement of parents, young people and their social setting is crucial. We wish to make better use of the talents and abilities of individuals and their social networks. Youth welfare is based on a positive, proactive approach.

The new Youth Act creates new opportunities for young people and for the youth field itself. We are giving greater autonomy to the professionals who dedicate themselves heart and soul to this important work. Not only will this enable them to practise their profession even more effectively, but it will also benefit young people who will be able to fulfil their dreams and ambitions.

**Mrs. Floor van Houdt**

*Deputy Head of Department Unit for Youth Policy, DG EAC.*

Mrs. Van Houdt refers to the goals of the European Youth Strategy 2010-2018 to create more opportunities in education and on the labour market and to promote active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity. Necessary because young people are victims of the crisis, resulting in high youth unemployment rates and many young people at risk of social exclusion. Europe has 14 million young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). As a group they suffer from poor physical and mental health and do not participate as much in society as non-NEET's.

Youth work can make a difference for these young people. First, policy makers and other professionals must acquire more knowledge and exchange good practices. The report Value of youth work investigates how youth work contributes to the European objectives and which topics need further research. Currently there is an expert group working on a youth work quality system.

**Mr. Micha de Winter**

*Professor of Youth and Educational Studies, Utrecht University*

Youth workers should be connectors with the specific task of bonding and bridging with social capital. In this way they give (marginalised) youth a voice. Bonding is aimed at group building, cohesion, emancipation and empowerment of groups. Bridging aims at relations with other groups and enhances citizenship.

Youth participation is a process in which young people (learn to) become actively involved in decision-making concerning their own living-environment. This process also involves adults to cooperate with them and guide them. Youth participation is not only a task required by law but far more necessary for a strong society.

**Mr. Wouter Smits**

*Head department of Education, Labour market and Participation, municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch.*

Just because youth is a demographic minority, or they act differently from adults, doesn't mean we should see young people as a problem.

For more than ten years, I have been working for local governments in youth policy. Something which frustrates me, is that we don't succeed in ending our Janus face policy. Let me explain this.

Large numbers of research reports, show that investing in people early in life, pays out in the long run. Don't you all agree that preventing problems on front, is better than to solve them afterwards?

For example, research shows that one year of education, decreases the chance of health problems by almost 2%. And a student with a diploma, has two times more chance to get a job.

I've read this report on Youth Work in the European Union. I was kind of shocked to read that there is a decline in talent development and leisure activities in youth work. I see these activities as prevention activities in optima forma. I am shocked, because I see that this Janus face attitude of policymakers, is not Netherlands-bound.

Having said this, I want to emphasize that – still - our local policy is to invest in prevention. Prevention is the most basic base of sustainable and social caring society. That means we will continue to invest in social informal structures, often volunteer led. They are not problem focused, but talent focused.

Their focus is on what young people can, not on what they can't. Activities form an accessible way to make contact. Youth workers are no passengers. Trust and relation are core principles. The mutual investment is to improve young people's abilities, investment in talents.

#### 2.4 Monday 14.00 – 17.30 Workshops, reflection on (local and European) youth work

There were four different workshops, each of them focusing on a specific aspect of local youth work. In the workshop participants experienced this form of youth work and reflected on it. There was ample time to discuss youth work in different countries and learn from each other.

Each participant visited one workshop. Each group was asked to finish the workshop by formulating 3 common topics or dilemma's.

**Youth center "De Poort" (The gateway)** focused on the use of a youth center to achieve goals.

Topics: - Activation and participation; youngsters organize their own activities

- Community services accompanied by youth workers
- Relation with the neighborhood (problems with youngsters)
- Volunteering in the youth center
- Tour around the building

**Youth center "4West" and Broad School Kruiskamp** focused on Talent coaching and Girls Group work.

Topics: - Programme for exploring and developing talents, e.g. in the form of a contest. Volunteers helped to carry out the programme.

- Approach on making girls assertive and self-conscious about aspects concerning dealing with parents, religion, social behavior, sex etc. Two girls told about their experiences with this approach.

**Youth center "4West" and Talent Discovery** focused on Working in the neighborhoods and Talent discovery.

Topics: - Youth work in the neighborhoods (outreaching youth work) with attention to making contact, building up relationships, dealing with neighborhood hassle and the relation with youth work in the youth centers.

- Results of a survey about the importance of talent discovery and talent coaching by Mrs. Maïke Kooijmans, lector of Avans University of Applied Sciences/Researcher University of Amsterdam.
- Presentation of an award-winning soccer project and visiting a game of outdoor soccer.

**T.O.M.: tailor made approach on early school leaving** focusing on guidance towards education and

Topics: - Results of a survey about professionals in the field of youth work

- Motivating youngsters to finish their education or choose a fitting job
- The role of youth work within T.O.M.
- Visit training sessions for participants (communication, creativity and languages)

Several young people were asked to make a short film of the workshops. The films were shown the next day as a sphere impression to inform all participants on all workshops. The films can be found on the website [www.intercityyouth.eu](http://www.intercityyouth.eu).

#### 2.4 Tuesday 9.30 – 12.30 Thematic programme: How do we manage innovation in youth work?

**Mrs. Loes van der Meijs**, alderman of the Dutch municipality of Doetinchem and member of the EU Commission Education, Youth, Culture and Research opened the day. Next to the European participants, about 40 Dutch participants were welcomed. They represent both departments of youth of municipalities and local organizations for youth work.

We discussed in a “World Cafe”- setting in three rounds.

Input for the discussion came from Monday’s workshops by means of films and formulated questions or dilemma’s. The list of these 12 topics can be found in 3.2. Each World Café table covered one question/theme.

In round 1 participants gathered around one of twelve round tables, max. 8 persons. Each table discussed a certain theme, remarks are written on large sheets of paper. A World Cafe Host encouraged a good discussion. He/She acts as a facilitator: ask for clarification, invite people to participate, summarize and ensure that essential elements of the discussion are written down.

In round 2 participants chose another table. The discussion leader briefly summarized the essential elements and the discussion started from here.

In round 3 the same procedure.

In the plenary discussion the World Cafe Host reported the findings at her/his table. This oral report, together with the written remarks, are the main input for the network and the NJI. A brief report is enclosed with this report.

The results of the discussion will be used to set the agenda for the InterCity network and for the Dutch report on youth work by the NJI.

### **3. Results and Continuation**

The most important results of the conference concern the peer learning aspects; the main goal of the conference. The programme offered ample possibilities for interaction, discussion, reflection and exchanging opinions and ideas. The combination of European and Dutch participants of the last day of the conference turned out to be a valuable aspect of the programme.

Apart from this, we consider the network and the common topics as important results.

#### **3.1 Network InterCity Youth**

On November 9th a European network of local departments for youth work was founded. The aim of this network is to enhance the quality of youth work in the EU member states. Enclosed is the document “Common grounds and intentions”.

Youth work needs to develop and local departments are, together with young people, the prime stakeholders. Without their knowledge and active contributions no real and sustainable development could be accomplished. The ICY-network wants to be the arena for mutual development and the voice of local departments in relation to other stakeholders on national and European level.

The objectives of the network are to:

1. Enhance peer learning between local departments of youth work; providing directors and staff opportunities to professional development, mutual support and stimulation.
2. Promote the exchange and development of tools for enhancing and making visible the importance and quality of youth work.
3. Promote youth work as an arena for learning.
4. Promote the exchange and development of new approaches, methods and practices in youth work.
5. Contribute to European youth policies; transmitting knowledge and insight from local government experiments and solutions to European policy agendas.

The network co-operates with other organizations and networks. The network is an independent, non-profit and non-political organization. The Board is responsible for all activities; its legal seat is Gothenburg, Sweden.

On the first day of the conference 12 municipalities or networks signed as a member. A few weeks later a new municipality signed. A list of network members is enclosed. In the network almost 400 local departments are represented. Many more have shown their interest in the network, the expectation is therefore that the number of participants will increase in future.

The network members will meet in February 2015. The Board prepares the network programme. The programme may concern conferences, seminars, collection of good practices, databases, thematic working groups, job shadowing programmes etc. Projects for Erasmus+ and/or Youth in Action are also considered. The information will be shared by internet on [www.intercityyouth.eu](http://www.intercityyouth.eu). The fourth InterCity Youth conference is in November 2015 in Gothenburg, Sweden.

### 3.2 Common topics

In a work group setting on Tuesday morning, European and Dutch participants formulated 12 common topics for strengthening youth work on both international and national level.

The topics are:

1. ICY-network
2. Youth work and learning
3. Balance between general and targeted youth work
4. Trust from young people and cooperation with other professionals
5. Combining problem oriented and positive youth work?!
6. Volunteers and youth work
7. Gender and youth work
8. Making visible the value of youth work
9. Managing innovation in youth work
10. Employability and youth work
11. Youth work as an agent for social change
12. International mobility and youth work

The Board of the InterCity Youth network will use these topics as input for the programme and for the next conference. The NJI (Dutch Youth Institute) will use these topics in their final report on the Dutch youth work.

Henny Wibbelink  
January 2015