



#EAYW MEETS BRIDGES FOR TRAINERS: PART 1



How are current developments and innovation and quality in youth work discussed in different thematic events in European Youth Work? The European Academy on Youth Work (EAYW) will be joining some European events to find out more about inspirational reflections and responses to current developments aiming to support quality and innovation in youth work. The first event we joined was Bridges for Trainers. This is the first article in which you can read more about our impressions. In the second article, you have the opportunity to read more from two trainers who participated in Bridges for Trainers!

ON CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND THE POSSIBLE ROLE OF EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK TRAINERS

From 17th to 20th November 2020, EAYW took part in Bridges for Trainers (hereafter: Bridges). Bridges is part of the 'Trainers Competence Development project' under the European Training Strategy and one of the key events bringing together trainers in European youth work on a regular basis to (re-) connect, exchange on hot topics and developments of relevance for the European youth work training field and reflect on responses to them. The event was organised by the Romanian National Agency of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes together with SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre.

Due to Covid-19, this year's edition of Bridges, "Rethinking – Reconnecting – Rebuilding", was taking place online. Connecting while distancing was challenging (of course), nevertheless Bridges offered a great space for inspiration and reflection!

With the increasing role of social media and influence of technology firms and the commercial sector, the context in which young people's learning happens has been undergoing massive changes already well before the current corona crisis, which has led to an even stronger influence of the digital environment.

EAYW wanted to know: What are the current developments related to young people's learning that trainers in European youth work should be aware of? Do trainers need to develop new perspectives, roles or approaches in order to effectively and adequately respond to these developments?

Rethinking training under the impact of corona

As some studies have shown¹ and was further expressed by participants of Bridges, the current restrictions on mobility and social gatherings imposed by Covid-19 have led trainers and training providers in European youth work to rethink and prioritise, to focus on the need to take care (of ourselves and of young people), to listen to understand (rather than listening to respond) and to act in solidarity with each other. This has been experienced as a challenge but also a chance for learning and development. Some questions expressed by trainers were: How to deal with uncertainty, "where are my borders and what I am able to do", how

to connect differently but still be connected, and how to address the digital divide and promote equity? All of this, as one trainer said, while “we are learning about the fragility of our professional status”.

Looking outside the box: supporting young people's learning. What can we learn from the commercial sector?

Bridges enabled its participants to take a look outside the box, at the broader context of learning in young people's lives, through an inspiring input by Matthijs Leendertse, owner of ELM². Alongside the growing importance of social media and commercialised digital environments in young people's lives, he explained, the trend towards personalised learning had been increasing, and with it the risk of growing inequalities.

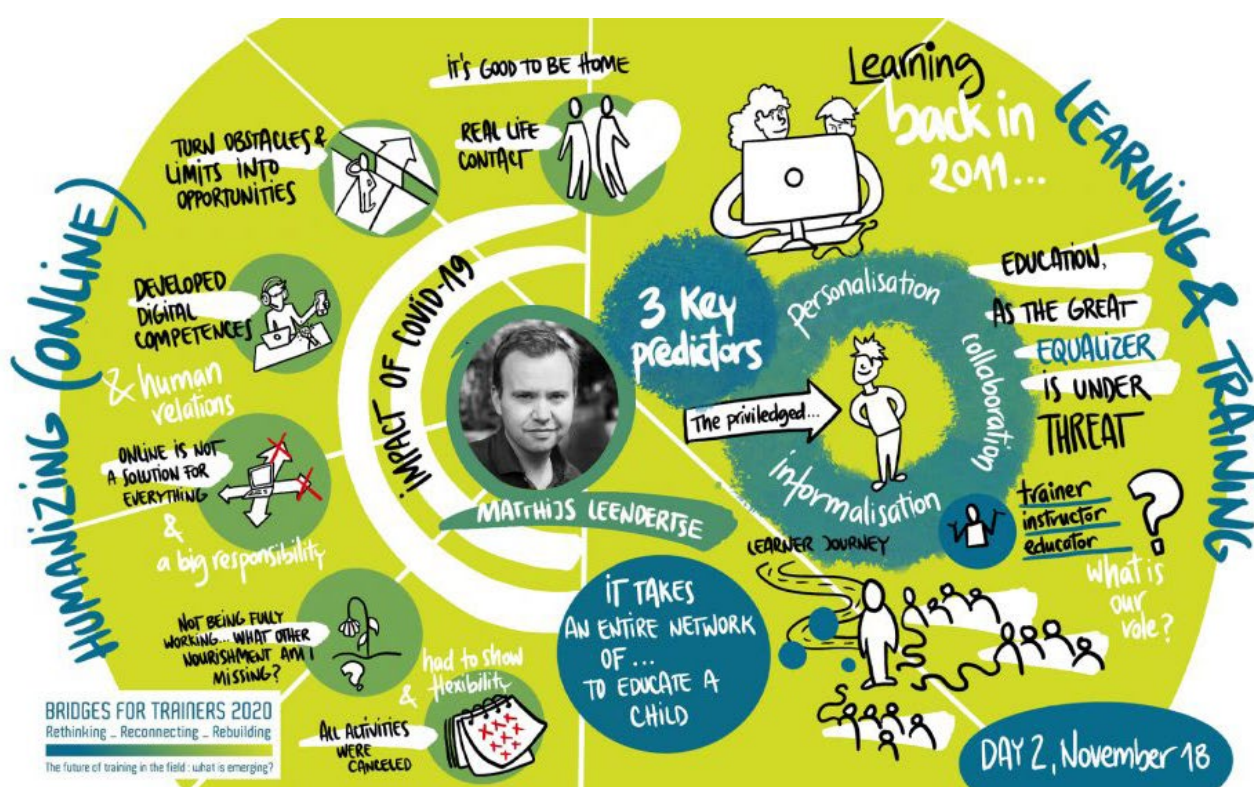
The understanding that young people's learning happens in different environments (school, home, among peers, online etc.) is not new. But, according to Matthijs Leendertse, it was the commercial sector that had most efficiently made use of this understanding by creating “user journeys”: looking at and responding to user needs (especially of younger audiences) over time by connecting different (service and production) channels to a coherent whole (e.g.

from watching an interesting input to buying a product and following a tutorial on how to use it). The educational sector might learn from the commercial sector and transfer the way it recognised and responded to young people's needs and wishes to the educational sector. The same applied to trainers and youth workers as part of the wider Community of Practice.

“It takes a village, or an empowered network, to raise a child”

Transferring the notion of the “user journey” to the educational context, Matthijs Leendertse evoked the image of the “learner journey”, in which several channels (school, home, online environments, peers, youth work etc.) contribute to the personal learning journey of a young person. In an increasingly personalised learning environment, equality, a key notion in the current concept of education, needed to be replaced by equity. “Although both promote fairness, equality achieves this through treating everyone the same regardless of need, while equity achieves this through treating people differently dependent on need. However, this different treatment may be the key to reaching equality”³.

The key challenge, according to Matthijs Leendertse, was that this current learning environment consisting of various channels was diverse and highly complex, yet there was no owner of a young person's “learner journey”. This would give young people a lot of autonomy but also made it very difficult for them to find their own learning path. What was needed, in his opinion, was an empowered network connecting the different channels (each supported by public funding), in order to provide guidance for young people and reduce inequalities, led by a kind of “conductor” or “orchestrator”⁴.



Author of the visualisations (graphic recording): Andreea Buzec

What could be the role of (European youth work) trainers in an increasingly personalised learning environment?

What could this scenario mean for European youth work and training? What could be the role of trainers in such an environment? As was expressed in the discussion following the input, youth workers take care of young people's personal and civic development. In an environment characterised by multiple learning channels (with potentially competing and contradictory objectives and content), it could be one of the trainers' roles to help youth workers understand young people's learning needs, contexts and reality, and the guidance and support that they might need to grow, and to support youth workers accordingly. As one of the facilitators of Bridges, Darko Marković, asked in the concluding session: how can we as

REFERENCES:

- 1 Stefan Georgiev, An Independent Research: Covid-19 and its impact on International youth work. Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DA7qqmus-PNRrfToaasdm3PYohAydxdmD/view>;
- 2 Matthijs Leendertse (1976) is the owner of ELM (www.elmconcepts.com). He is specialised in innovation in learning and training, working for a variety of organisations from schools, universities and cultural institutions to public broadcasters, educational NGO's and large corporations for corporate learning. His work includes research, policy and strategy advice and developing new educational products and services.
- 3 <https://social-change.co.uk/blog/2019-03-29-equality-and-equity>
- 4 In his input, Matthijs Leendertse used the word "instructor", which was replaced in the discussion by other terms that participants considered more suitable for the context of education and training, such as conductor, educator or orchestrator.

You can watch Matthijs Leendertse's lecture [here](#)!

For more insights into the European Youth Work Agenda and its connection to training, you can watch the [video presentation by Hans-Georg Wicke](#).

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trainers act as orchestrators of learning and use various channels for learning ourselves and/or collaborate with other providers of learning and education?

Bridges did not answer this question but it opened the space for reflection. The awareness of a multitude of "channels" influencing young people's learning left some trainers feeling humble thinking about what trainers in European youth work might specifically have to offer. In his presentation of the European Youth Work Agenda, Hans-Georg Wicke, Head of Jugend für Europa, German National Agency of Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes, reminded the participants that youth work was currently high on the political agenda, highlighting the role of the trainers' community and the relevance of inspirational ideas to take youth work forward. So maybe, this is a good time indeed to further define what could and should be the role of European youth work training in the global context of young people's learning and growth in an increasingly personalised and as yet rather unguided learning environment?

