



Youth Work Networks

the Euro-Med Youth Platform

The Euro-Med Youth Platform (EMYP) aims at bringing young people from the region together in an environment of tolerance and mutual understanding, facilitating networking, increasing youth participation, sharing of relevant information, and exchanging good youth work practice.

The objectives of the EMYP are the nurturing of democracy and its established instruments, fostering mutual understanding as well as improvement in the issues of racism, gender equality and minority rights. The Platform contributes to the development of co-operation in the youth sector between thirty-five countries, parties to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Agreement (Barcelona Declaration).

The EMYP acknowledges young people as the main protagonists in its work agenda and thus young people's needs are the guidelines for its operational strategy. This notion was the motivation for the EMYP to embark on a needs analysis of young people within the Euro-Med region. The outcomes of this research which are represented in this publication are envisaged to inspire and guide the EMYP's work as much as that of anybody who is involved in the youth field.

Based in Malta, the EMYP Secretariat is hosted within the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA). The EUPA is responsible for the management and implementation of the Youth in Action Programme (YiA), the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), the National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance (Euroguidance), CEDEFOP Study Visits, Euro-desk and the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals



Short Note

This publication has been inspired by field research which the Euro-med Youth Platform has asked me to carry out for the past year. It all started when a group of 26 young people coming from Tunisia, Syria, Palestine, Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Jordan, Greece, Italy, and Malta, gathered together in June 2008 for a conference to re-launch the Euromed Youth Platform (EMYYP). The conference aimed to explore further the development of the Euro-med Youth Platform and focused on networking functions. Young people discussed the needs of their organisations and came up with several questions which could enable them find out whether other youth organisations had similar needs. A smaller group of young people got together again in November 2008 to study the outcomes of the conference

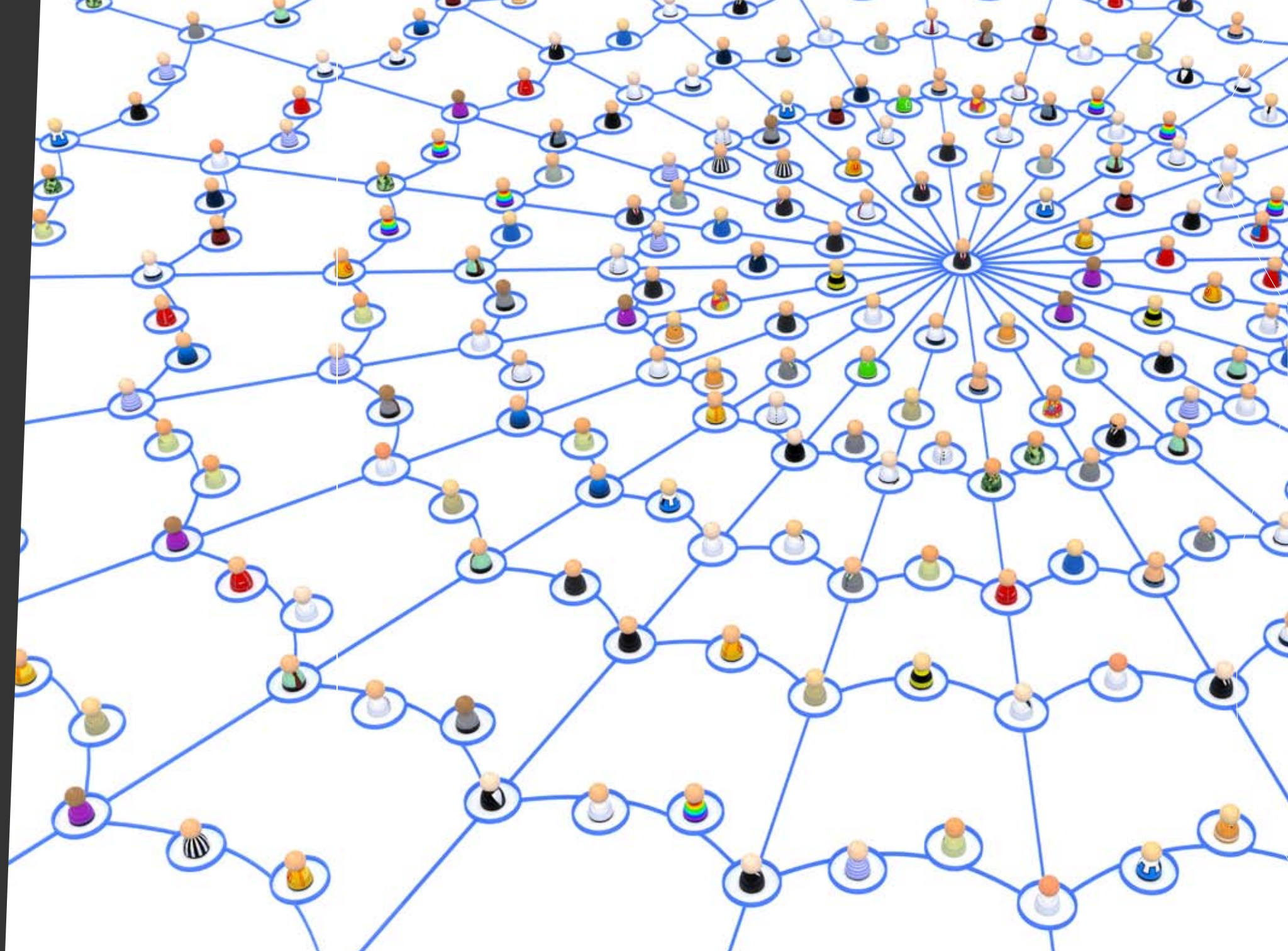
and to finalise a questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to organisations to enable us to analyse youth work networks. Unfortunately response from the questionnaires was too poor to come up with statistical data. However, both youth gatherings were rich sources of qualitative data. Such data inspired me to come up with a simple text that can be followed by young people to help them realise what they can achieve both for themselves and society, by engaging in networks. The text aims to enthuse youth organisations and young people to create and join networks. The young people engaged in this project and the youth organisations which answered the questionnaire enabled me to come up with a simple four-step model.

Miriam Teuma

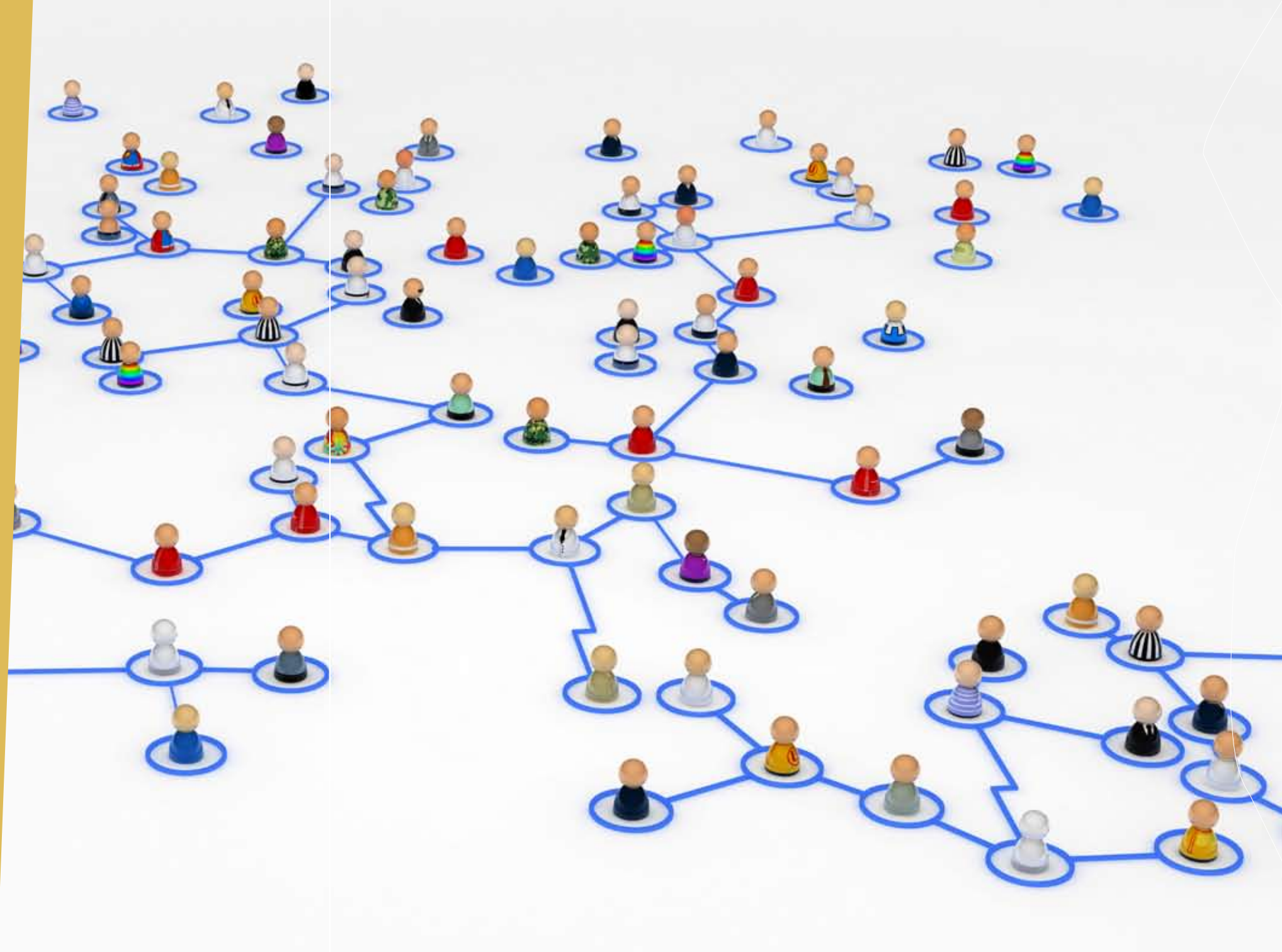


Net-Works

A NET can be looked at as a number of points or nodes linked together by threads or strings. Metaphorically, the points or nodes can be people, theories, values, beliefs, ideas and attitudes which are continuously moving, growing, decaying and breaking, being reborn and growing again in new forms, like all living 'things' (organisms) do. It is a pattern characteristic of living organisms, distinguishing 'us' from non-living matter, to reproduce, multiply and magnify ourselves then to decay, die and be reborn (recycled!) both physically and metaphorically. In the context of youth work networks, the metaphorical resurrection of the spirit in new young people is more important than the recycling of our bodies. But both forms of recycling are necessary if life is to continue. Imagine a world with no decaying or dying! Healthy cells grow and multiply themselves by dividing (sharing) themselves. Then they die to become 'food' for successive, new generations (young people). Networks form, renew themselves and 'die' to make space for new networks to form. If the nets are to be maintained they will need both 'mending' and 'adding to'. In post-modern terms, 'deconstructing' and 'reconstructing' must be continuous.



NETS AT WORK – NETWORKS can be seen as 4-dimensional structures moving, changing and growing into lumpy shapes with no sharp edges or outer boundaries. The linking between lumps (sub-cultures with sub-languages) is far from perfect. Links and nodes become interdependent but separate from each other and together, they develop a particular episode for a youth organisation.



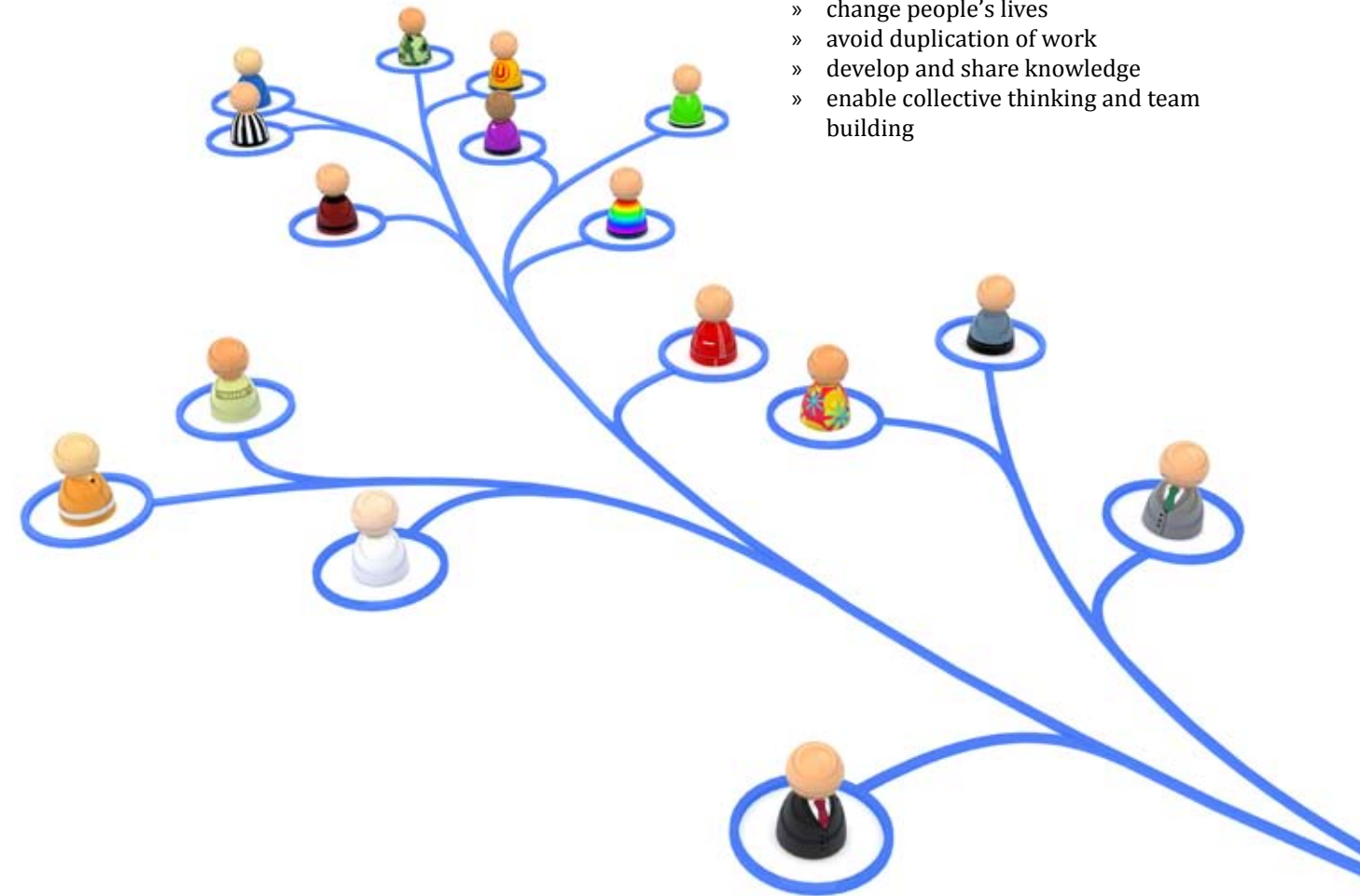
A Network Activity...

A networking activity may be episodic, unfolding over time through a series of different phases. The exact list of steps or stages varies, but there is generally some sort of initiation phase, a phase in which the educational activity is carried out and grows, and then some sort of wrap-up phase, before we move on to a new activity. There are no final conclusions or 'ends', only better ways of going on.

Research shows that youth organisations may form networks to acquire resources which they lack and need. This reasoning suggests that organisations which are dissimilar may interconnect and be complementary. Organisations which are different may make change possible. They can be seen as complementary and competing in friendly rivalry. Organisations which are similar determine linkages to pursue joint goals, deliver joint programmes and co-ordinate efforts to grow more effectively.

Young people believe that... activity networks...

- » are fun and playful
- » stimulate creativity and innovation
- » encourage opinion sharing
- » enable a clearer understanding of our own and other cultures
- » overcome stereotypes
- » change people's lives
- » avoid duplication of work
- » develop and share knowledge
- » enable collective thinking and team building



Establishing Networks

Young people think that the following themes can be taken up...

...by Euro-med network potentials...

Step 1 - CREATE POOLS OF NETWORK POTENTIALS

Network potentials are constituted by the youth organisations in the region which can be persuaded to create a network. To create network potentials a co-ordinating body must win attitudinal support through determined endeavours in which it propagates its view that certain youth situations can be acted upon and can be changed through collective, co-operative and interactive efforts.

- » Non-formal Education
- » Youth and Economy for young entrepreneurs
- » Youth and Politics
- » Sustainable Development
- » Consultation in Youth Policy Development
- » Right to Movement
- » Peace Making
- » Conflict Resolution
- » Minority Rights
- » Intergenerational Dialogue

How?

Are you a member of an organisation which is working with one of the themes that has just been mentioned?

Are you interested in getting a network activated?

- » Take Action
- » Speak Out Loud
- » Make Democracy Work
- » Encourage Your Organisation To Seek Assistance From The Euro-Med Youth Platform For Possible Partners
- » Generate Pressure To Activate A Network

Step 2 - ACTIVATE A NETWORK

The activation of a network increases probability that youth organisations which are network potentials become sites for practical mobilisation projects. Persons who hold positions in these organisations are the ones to be focused on, once a network is activated. If these persons back out, the attempted recruitment channels die out, However, network potentials may open other 'ends'. Network activation motivates young people.

*Young people think.....
...that networks can be
activated by...*

- » Making information more accessible
- » Putting up calls for networks on the Euro-med Youth Platform website
- » Securing partnership through the Euro-med Youth Platform
- » Screening potential partners
- » Distributing good practices





Step 3 - MOTIVATION TO ENGAGE WITH COMMITMENT

The motivation to engage in the network is a function of perceived costs and benefits. Perceived costs are overcome by support mechanisms, while benefits enable the targets of the mobilisation potentials to become motivated and engage in networking.



*Young people feel that support...creates and reinforces possibilities.
Support includes:*

- » Financial resources
- » Relevant connections
- » Assistance to convene network meetings
- » Help in the follow-up process

How?

IF YOU NEED SUPPORT YOU MUST LOOK FOR IT

- » Look up for the 'Fund Hunt' www.euromedp.org
- » to find out which entity may be offering funds that support your network
- » Ask the Euro-med Youth Platform Secretariat to assist you in finding relevant connections or to help you convene network meetings
- » Attend capacity building seminars to acquire the skills which will help you follow up a network.



Step 4 - REMOVING BARRIERS

Motivation and barriers interact to maintain networks. This opens two strategies in networking: both positively maintaining or increasing motivation and negatively removing barriers. The first strategy is closely related to Step 3 since it depends on how intense the motivation is. The latter strategy requires knowledge of barriers and resources to remove them. We cannot escape from a prison unless we are aware that we are in one and realise where the stone walls and iron bars are. 'Walls' and 'bars' are usually emotional and intellectual barriers rather than physical ones.

However young people think that... network activities work if people:

- » Are open, awake, alive and become aware that there are options other than what they are doing now
- » Trust themselves
- » Are conscious and well informed of the risks that need to be taken
- » Inspire themselves to inspire others
- » Are committed to their commitment
- » Organise themselves
- » Are open to feedback and criticism
- » Are less judgemental and less narrow-minded
- » Accumulate experience
- » Remind themselves why they are doing this
- » Seek funding
- » Are positive, creative, constructive, as well as critical
- » Have a pluralistic view (more than one way of looking at things)
- » Show appreciation.

Barriers include....

- » Lack of freedom of movement
- » Poor language competences
- » The miss-leading nature of commonsense languages
- » Lack of equal respect and valuing
- » Diverse legal expectations
- » Lack of political will
- » Religious diversities and fixities

Throughout a network activity youth... wish to engage in the following:

Why Network?

Activity networks produce 'relational resources' which increase individuals' social confidence and political participation. They serve to establish strong loyalties within homogeneous groups (bonding). Simultaneously they can serve to integrate and attract others with whom they would not normally have contact (bridging). Such BONDING or BRIDGING networks bring young people together in mutual reinforcing, 'confidence-establishing' activities.

Networking assists

young people in becoming oriented towards the adult world, facilitating the transition from youth to adulthood

and

adults to become younger in mind.

- » Setting up of an e-learning platform
- » Training development
- » Information exchange
- » Sharing of good practice
- » Campaigns
- » Petitions
- » Conventions
- » Political lobbying
- » Producing published materials
- » Research
- » Financed projects.





The four step model is intended to present the data collected in the form of a tool to motivate you and your organisation to engage in networks. It is also intended to draw attention to the Euro-med Youth Platform and inspire the secretariat to find ways of supporting Euro-med partners in networking activities.

Its purpose is to motivate young people and adults to engage together in a joint reflective journey which enables them to take action in networks and to bring change in society.



About the author...



Miriam Teuma is a lecturer within the Department of Youth and Community Studies at the University of Malta. She has been working with young people in diverse settings for these past fifteen years. She has also been involved in a number of European and Euromed Projects. At the moment she forms part of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy and the EC expert group on the Mobility of Young Volunteers. Her academic interests are non-formal education, youth policy and youth work practice.



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