



Communication across the Borders



YOUTH CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION
AND COMMUNICATION

Spontaneous and fun – but with real results



*Region Blekinge is lead partner for the project and even though it's an international project, Lisa Andersson still thinks that the local region has benefited from it as well. Both politically and for the local youth.
– It has given us very many good contacts for the future as well as a lot of cred from the European Commission. And even though it's a long term project, I think we'll soon be able to see how it has affected the local youth in Blekinge as well, she says.*

As project coordinator for Yc3, Lisa Andersson is the only full-time worker on the project. She does everything from travel bookings to meeting with coordinators in the EU commission. And even though it's sometimes a lot of work, she also think the job is very fun and rewarding.

According to her, Yc3 is important because it gives youth an arena to influence and participate in. She thinks that the project can be a platform for the youth, who don't have the same possibilities as adults. It can also give them financial support.

– The young people themselves decide what each meeting should be about. It's important to get a young generation that takes an active interest in society. If you do, you'll also get involved adults in the end, she says.

Yc3 have also been able to get actual results in their work. In one of the Yc3 meetings the participants sent a text about young entrepreneurs to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The text later got included in an Action plan linked to the strategy.

– It means that if someone applies for money from the European Union and are able to refer to the text about entrepreneurs, they have better chances of getting financial support from the European Union, says Lisa Andersson.

The Youth-in-Connection meeting in Karlskrona is the biggest so far, with all eight regions and about 80 persons

participating. Lisa Andersson hopes that it results in new ideas for projects that can be done within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

– But the meeting is a goal in itself. It's so fun to meet and to grow closer to each other. Our countries are so close geographically, yet we don't really know anything about each other's countries.

– And the countries are all really beautiful when you visit them, she says.

Youth Are More Equal

Being a project for and by young people sets its mark on how the work is done. Lisa Andersson describes it as spontaneous, sometimes messy, and a lot of work. But also fun and very rewarding.

– I think it's fine if it gets a bit messy sometimes. A lot of good things come out of it as well and the participants get much experience from it.

She also believes that youth have an easier time communicating with each other across borders than older people have.

– I don't know if it's the Internet or that the countries are more similar now, but it's very different from when I'm at meetings with politicians from the same countries. Young people can speak on much more equal grounds and there aren't as many power games as it can be with adults.

This is a presentation of the Youth-in-connection summit in Karlskrona 23 – 24 July 2010.

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Youth influence – for better or for worse



In the corner exercise you had to take a stance and also be prepared to motivate and defend your opinion.

Although the questions were serious, there was still time for a laugh or two.

The topic of influence stirred many emotions on the first day in Karlskrona. The young participants discussed where they thought that the South Baltic Sea Region would be in 2030, and suggested projects that would lead there. They also had a heated debate based on a corner exercise.

In the corner exercise the exercise leaders Elise Wåhlin and Cajsa Augustzén asked a question to which there were four possible answers symbolized by the four corners of the room. The participants then had to stand in the corner with the answer that they most agreed with. And after choosing a corner, they had to give a reason for their choice.

In the first questions most agreed with each other. Everyone thought that it was important for young people to take part in the decision-making process, but they were divided about which decisions youth should have a saying in. About half the group seemed to think that youth should only take part in questions that they were knowledgeable about, while the other half thought that young people should be involved in all decisions.

Almost everyone thought it was either “very difficult” or “a bit difficult” for young people to take part in decision-making processes. Some thought it was very hard because of the big responsibilities that comes with the decision-making power, while someone thought that the hard part was that

politicians don’t invite young people into the decision making process. The very few in the “easy” corner had a different approach.

– If you are really sure and believe strongly in something, it’s not that hard. You need to find the right people and get to know the decision-makers. Then it’s quite easy, they claimed.

Democracy Questions

The third and final question was probably the most controversial and sparked a small debate between the different groups. The question was “What is most important for democracy”, with the four corners being “Freedom of speech”, “Free and open elections”, “Security”, and the last corner was for those who thought something entirely different was most important.

The participants divided almost equally between “Freedom of speech” and “Free and open elections” and the open corner was slightly bigger. The “Security” corner had just one, brave participant.

– Freedom of speech is the basis to organize everything else, like elections and security. Nothing works without it, said the “Freedom of speech”-corner.

– But in order to make decisions you need to be elected. Freedom of speech isn’t enough, claimed those in the “Free and open elections”-corner.

– Neither elections nor freedom of speech matter, unless you have food and safety, said the young man in the



Before the workshop started, there was a speed-dating where people moved around and got to know each other.

“Security”-corner.

While there were strong opinions, everything was said in a good spirit. When the exercise ran out of time, some of the stronger voiced participants gladly decided to continue the debate during the coffee break.

Projects for a Baltic Future

In the second part of the workshop, the participants were divided into ten smaller groups to discuss different subjects. They had to imagine how the Baltic Sea region would look in 2030 and they also needed to think out a project that would help the region get there. The forecast for 2030 had a wide range. Some thought that the European Union would have more power, some thought that the sea level would rise and someone thought that there would be more Chinese people living and working in the region, amongst other ideas.

The projects were both wide and ambitious. A few of them wanted to help the environment by cleaning the Baltic Sea and raising awareness of the problem. There even was an idea about having a sailboat travelling around the sea and informing people as well as leading with a good example of Eco-friendly transportation.

Many ideas were also based on using Internet as a portal for bringing people closer. It could be by making it easier for youth to grow up on equal terms or by helping them travel more and visit each other. One project wanted to create an international youth centre to connecting youth with businessmen and politicians.

When young participants got to criticize each other’s projects at the end of the second day, most of the responses were positive and constructive. And with time and financial support, some of the ideas might either turn out as planned or change into something else, perhaps bigger and better.

How is it possible to increase youth influence?



MOHAMMAD AL SAQR

– The parents need to spend more time with their children and raise them better. Then the young people will get more influence. I don’t think they are ready for it today.



LUDWIG REIS ARONSSON

– The student councils might be a good way to increase youth influence. Today they lack power, but are still doing a good job. If you change the laws to give them more power, the politicians would have to listen more to them.



ODETTA TUNYLA

– We can get more influence if all young people join into one power and work together. I think it’s very important, because many decisions will influence our future.

Adventures in the Archipelago



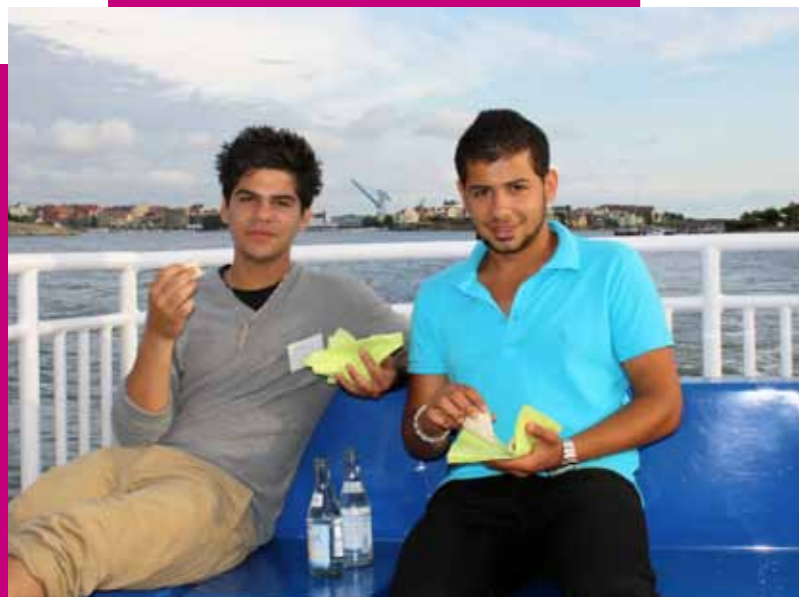
After a day full of activities and workshops, the participants got to take a boat tour in the Karlskrona archipelago. The many sights around the port town were all pointed out by the boat guide.



Although the deck was crowded, there was still enough space to try out some acrobatics.



There was no alcohol on the sea, but some of the participants seemed to enjoy their water just as much.



The back of the boat was a good place to relax in the sun and enjoy some appetizers. The town of Karlskrona can be seen in the background.



There were plenty of happy faces as the sun set over the sea.



Much to see and many friends makes good targets for photography.

On the Radio



YOUTH-IN-CONNECTION Summit in Karlskrona attracted the Swedish radio station Sveriges Radio Blekinge. On the second day the reporter Ludvig Drevfjäll visited the meeting to conduct interviews about what young people can do to make a change. He interviewed Elise Wåhlin, Gediminas Ruskys and Linnea Malmström to get a picture of what is happening within YC3.

Stormy Weather



THE SECOND DAY of the Youth-in-connection Summit was wet and windy. The presentation of the results from the workshops was planned to take place in Blekinge Museum, but the heavy rain and wind caused a change of plans and the presentations were held in Scandic hotel. Outside the hotel the Swedish flags had to be taken down in the afternoon so as not to be torn apart by the wind.

Entrepreneurship – a world of unexploited opportunities



Life as self-employed makes life independent and flexible. Still too many young people hesitate because of fears like bankruptcy and paper work.

Future opportunities by entrepreneurship were discussed and new projects came up in the workshops.

About 50 per cent of all young people would like to be self-employed. In reality only about 10 per cent start their own companies. Entrepreneurship is a world of unexploited opportunities.

There are several reasons why young people want to be entrepreneurs. It makes life independent and flexible. But there are fears, stopping people from starting their own companies. Fear of going bankrupt, fear of lack of financing and lack of skills. The workshop on entrepreneurship during the Youth-in-connection summit was intended to find tools in the struggle between motivation versus fear.

Three main bricks in the building of entrepreneurship in the Baltic Sea region as well in the rest of the world are:

- Success stories. Inspiration from people who have fulfilled their dreams and started their own companies.
- Education. Most young people need to know more about what it is like to be self-employed.
- Networking. Building contact with other young entrepreneurs as well with people who can give good legal and financial advice.

During the workshop groups worked out concrete projects, that could be realized tomorrow. These are some examples:

Small little things

The target group is small companies and self-employed people from different countries in the Baltic Sea Region. Small little things would provide for example management, IT and logistics for the companies and help the local companies to work in an international environment.

The companies could be for example handicraft producers and the project could broaden the markets as well as the minds. Together all these small companies can grow strong and in the future the project could expand to other regions. The comments on this project were very positive, such as "I would like to work with it".

YES! – Young Entrepreneurship

The aim of this project is to create a network of young entrepreneurs around the Baltic region. This project could encourage competition of business plans as well as an exchange of know-how.

The result would be not only contacts and connections, but also new brilliant ideas and inspiration. The target groups are young entrepreneurs but also university students and youth workers.

Organizing workshops and conferences, creating a web site, using Facebook for communication, all would help to make this possible. The comments on this project pointed out that this Saturday in Karlskrona could be a start for the project. And everyone really loved the title!

UngÖ – creating a future on Öland

UNGÖ IS A NETWORK FOR young people on the Swedish island of Öland with an interest in starting their own business.

– We are trying to create a future on Öland, making it possible for young people to stay on the island after school, says Jan Fredrik Wahlin.

Today young people leave Öland when they are 16 years old to go Kalmar on the Swedish mainland to study. Many of them never come back.

– UngÖ started out as a platform to develop new ideas. We want to be forum for young entrepreneurs to meet local businessmen, civil workers, politicians as well as other young people, says Jan Fredrik Wahlin, who is employed by the municipality of Borgholm to start UngÖ.

Öland is a place where a lot of people spend their holidays, but in the winter there are only 23 000 people living on the island. It is important to make it possible to live on the island all year round.

– We firmly believe that there is a future for young people if they are inspired to develop new ideas and start new businesses, says Jan Fredrik Wahlin.

Viktor Jarnheimer lives on Öland. He is 19 and started his company Jarnheimer Productions when he was 16. He is building interactive web sites and buying and selling advertising.

– My parents supported me from the start. Young people without supportive parents have to find this resource elsewhere, Viktor Jarnheimer says.

He thinks that entrepreneurship is very much a question of attitude. Attitudes that have to be changed.

– The school system is neglecting young people with energy and new ideas. Again that is where UngÖ comes in as a support. We want to show young people that it is possible to use their skills to create their own future on Öland, says Viktor.

UngÖ uses Facebook to communicate. You can join the group Nätverket UngÖ at Facebook to follow the development.



Viktor Jarnheimer and Jan Fredrik Wahlin want UngÖ to be a network that makes it possible for young people to make ideas happen and stay on Öland.

What could make young people start their own companies?



BENEDIKTAS GRINCINAITIS

– We need to motivate young people to start their own companies locally. It is important to travel to find inspiration to find new ideas.

– This job can only be done by ourselves. We can not expect anything from our government, but rely on our own energy and creativity.



MARGARITA YUDINA

– We have to change the stereotype that it is very hard to run your own business. Today there is a fear of lots of paper work and economic insecurity. My father is an entrepreneur and my mother helps him with the paper work, so I know it is not that hard.

– So what we have to do is educate people. People in the universities must learn more about what it means to be an entrepreneur, but also to understand the small companies role in the society. I will try to learn more, but in the future I would definitely try to start my own company.



KARLINA TREIJA

– In Finland, where I study, there are a lot of possibilities but too many young people are too shy and too passive to take the chances.

– I think we need to start youth groups where it is possible to have activities and start to do things together. International cooperation is also a good way to stimulate entrepreneurship. After today I have new ideas of how to start new activities at home.

Saving Nemo and starting a Green Baltic Festival



With energy and creativity it is possible to stop pollution and preserve nature. Maybe by saving Nemo, maybe by starting a Green Baltic Festival.

Let young people educate adults to make a fast change.

Can preserving nature and stopping pollution around the Baltic include modern development? Yes. But we have to start the change now. Maybe by saving Nemo.

The workshop on environment during the Youth-in-connection Summit contained some surprises: Art and the level of pollution in the Baltic Sea. Pollution does not stop at the borders. That makes it necessary to cooperate.

All the groups wanted to see a better coordination with common environmental laws in all countries, or at least common goals. And better coordination to get industries, farmers and governments to work together to get less chemicals and more fish in the Baltic Sea.

As someone said:

– The Polish coast is really dirty and adults never learned to live a green and clean life. Youngsters have awareness from school and could make a change.

A lot of ideas came up, like organizing competitions about which village is the cleanest or creating art by using garbage. There is a Baltic Sea strategy, but we have to make it happen now. The environment workshop came up with some projects that can start immediately.

Save Nemo

The fish in the sea need us. We will save Nemo and his friends

by educating adults and youth about how to make a change. The aim is to exchange experiences and establish contacts around the sea to increase the knowledge to be able to make a fast change.

Target groups are youth, universities, adults – everyone. And the fish in the sea.

One way to get results is to educate young people, who later can educate adults. Possible partners are regional offices, the universities around the Baltic Sea, companies, environmental offices, scouts and the youth board.

The comments on this project all say it is great idea and a great name. However someone wanted to know more about how to save Nemo.

Green Baltic Festival

Imagine a festival with workshops, competitions, music and ecological shops. Would you consider coming? The Green Baltic Festival would raise the awareness of the environment while having fun. It would connect and educate people in a new way. The target group is every one of all ages, connecting young people and adults.

In this way the environment would transform from a political question to an every day issue. To make the festival even more interesting the idea is to move around to new places every year.

All the comments say the same thing: "I want to take part. Call me and I'll be there."

What could young people do for the environment?



NICOLINE HJORTH MIKKELSEN

– We could start youth centres and invite people to music and sport events with green themes. Young people learn about global warming at school and it is important that we use our knowledge in our every day life. Choosing public transport and separating waste should be natural to everyone.

– Thinking globally, like we do at this meeting, is necessary to change the world in a green direction.



NATALIA MILIAVSKAIA

– In Russia we have a lot of environmental problems to solve. For us it is very important to come to meetings like this to learn from experiences of other countries like Sweden.

– I think we could start youth centres to activate young people. And it is important to show that there could be a market for companies to work with environmental issues.



VIOLETTA YURKEVICH

– Today there are no green organisations in our city. We are here to learn and we have to start the work at home right now. If we wait or just talk it will be too late.

– We have to start campaigns to engage young people for a cleaner city now. If we do that a lot of things can change to the better within ten years.



MARCO VALENTE

– What we have to do is get rid of the idea that there is one most important environmental issue. We have to understand that the environment is a very complex system. And we have to solve the problem by finding solutions to all different parts of this system.

Green teens – making a change

YOU DON'T HAVE TO KNOW who Barack Obama is to join Green Teens.
– Everyone who wants to make a change is welcome, says Kitty Ekman Ehn.

Green Teens have existed less than a year and have 100 members today. It is an independent organisation for young people, who want to make a difference, not only by talking but also in real life.

– We do not demand that our members know a lot about politics or anything else. The important thing is the will to make a change in everyday life, says Kitty Ekman Ehn.

From the start, Green teens were communicating the message by blogs and e-mail, but now they are turning to Facebook, because that's where young people are.

– The message is that it should be easy and fun to live a green life, says Kitty.



Kitty Ekman Ehn welcomes everyone who wants to make a change to Green Teens.



Lead partner



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