



Keep your distance?
Embracing Human Rights!
Senec • Bratislava



Let's open windows
para novas esperanças!
Serra de Estrela • Lisboa



Don't look away –
Let's take a first step ...!
Tettenborn • Hamburg



All different – All equal?
Caring for opportunities
Sofia



Moored in Malta
Qawra St Paul's Bay



Stop Loneliness -
Start Volunteering
Zagreb • Hamburg



All Children, all Right(s)
Leuven • Hamburg

e.p.a. • european playwork association



europajugendbüro.hamburg



Annual Report 2023

Introduction

We would like to start by thanking all of our fantastic hosts, who once again invited a number of international e.p.a. projects to their homes and communities. This year, gave us insights into their culture and neighbourhoods, shared good practice, worked with the e.p.a. team and other partners to ensure that all guests were well cared for and that everyone was able to take home a valuable learning experience, new friendships and many European and worldwide contacts. e.p.a. has remained true to its principle of only going to places where we get an invitation from, where local partners brought motivation and energy to develop and support exciting projects together! Without their local expertise, their local knowledge, their passion for the topics we work on together, their contacts and their lasting relationships with their young people from the communities, we would never be able to carry out our projects at this level. A special Grazie, ďakujem pekne, Благодаря, Dankeschön, muito obrigad@, hvala lijepa, merci to all colleagues, volunteers and young people who contributed and supported our activities 2023.

In 2023, we focussed our activities on our partnerships in Europe. We are particularly pleased that partners from non-EU member states were also involved. The fact that we were able to invite partners from countries such as Albania, Kosovo and the United Kingdom is mainly thanks to the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe and the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. We very much appreciate this kind of borderless support.

A seminar that took place in Slovakia where we worked on Human and Children's Rights, among other things, was funded by the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe and co-financed by the Slovakian Ministry of Justice! Unfortunately, we had to realise that we were one of the last beneficiaries of this type of co-financing in Slovakia. The election campaign in Slovakia had already seen attacks on the media and civil society. Finally the new government got stupid and immediately put this kind of support on ice.

e.p.a. Team Hamburg, February 2024

The e.p.a. network was substantially supported and funded by



e.p.a. • european playwork association

Palmaille 102
DE-22767 Hamburg / Europe

contact@epa-network.org
www.epa-network.org
+49.40.433 190

Europa JUGEND Büro



For more than 30 years, e.p.a. has been running the Europa JUGEND Büro as a youth drop-in service at our main office location in Hamburg. With open access to opportunities for European youth mobility and intercultural youth co-operation, creating local visibility for current European themes, youth initiatives, and voluntary services. All through the year, we informed and advised young people on international mobility projects during consultation meetings in our office or online, as well as on European fairs and through presentations at schools, colleges and other educational and youth institutions.



In multiplier events and various occasions during network meetings we encouraged committed youth workers and organisations to become involved in international youth work. Informing them about European funding, training and intercultural methodology.

> europajugendbuero.hamburg

Eurodesk Networking



With our Europa JUGEND Büro in Hamburg, e.p.a is an active and long-term Eurodesk partner and multipliers centre for the City of Hamburg. The e.p.a. staff are trained and regularly updated by Eurodesk in consulting young people on international mobility programmes by the EU, the Council of Europe, and national programmes. We took part in the annual network meeting with all other Eurodesk



multipliers in Germany, as well as online meetings and trainings throughout the year that are offered to partners of the German and the European network.

> eurodesk.eu

Annual Eurodesk Meeting

In June, the whole German Eurodesk Network came together for three days for the Annual Network Meeting in Magdeburg. We got to know the various different organisations (from local authorities to youth centres) represented in the network.

A representative from the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth explained the German view on European and international youth policy. We took part in different workshops: More than just dancing - shooting and editing short clips for TikTok, Insta and Co with your mobile phone, inclusive seminar organisation, how to integrate internationalisation into school life and communities. We also had the opportunity to learn about other German volunteer programmes to go abroad (e.g. weltwärts).

During the meeting the German Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps National Agency provided some input about the current state of play.

European Solidarity Corps



This year, e.p.a. welcomed new young people from different countries in Hamburg as volunteers with the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), an EU-funded voluntary service for young people aged 18-30 years. Since e.p.a. is active and registered as a sending, coordinating and hosting organisation, we are able to bring young people to Hamburg, but also to send young people from Germany to other European countries. In 2023, we sent seven people to France, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Austria, Finland and eight volunteer accomplished the ESC service in Romania, France, Spain, Lithuania and Hungary.

Volunteers hosted by e.p.a.



Our volunteers were actively involved in our 2023 projects: they supported logistics and organisation, facilitated workshops and games during our youth exchanges in Germany and Portugal and the two seminars in Bratislava and Malta. One of their tasks was to organise meetings of our Hamburg youth group, that participated in the youth exchange in Portugal. They also regularly take care for a very welcoming office environment and maintain our garden area that was used for many group meetings and small events during the year.

They also took part in local activities, e.g. the European week in Hamburg and they shared their ESC experiences in schools. Moreover, they created visual content for e.p.a.'s social media platforms.

Our e.p.a. volunteers Benyamin from Teheran/Thessaloniki who joined us as our new volunteer with the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) in February 2022 has successfully accomplished his ESC experience in January 2023.

From March 2023 e.p.a. has welcomed as the new volunteer Veniamin from Noginsk Moscow Region (Russia). As it is very difficult to work together with our Russian partners on other international projects due to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, which violates international law, we very much appreciated the opportunity to stay in contact with young Russians through the ESC.

From October 2023 our new volunteer from Amsterdam (Netherlands), Shahzan has joined. Shahzan has immediately shown his commitment to learn, and play an important role at the e.p.a. office by becoming part of different activities on a local level, as well as supporting the team on preparation for international activities.

e.p.a. as a coordinating ESC organisation

Currently, e.p.a. is coordinating ESC volunteers for our partners in Hamburg Abenteuerspielplatz Am Brunnenhof (adventure playground 'Bau') and for the Arbeitsgemeinschaft freier Jugendverbände (AGfJ - Working group of independent youth organisations).

The Baui hosted their second volunteer: Eralda from Durres/Albania joined in September 2022, playing and discovering with children on the playground. Eralda was also part of the team for the Seminar in Bratislava "Keep your Distance?-Embracing Human Rights", and has successfully accomplished her ESC by the end of August 2023. During 2023 the Baui welcomed their third ESC volunteer, Sabra from Finland.

During 2023, the two volunteers at AGfJ Saliha from Sinop/Turkey and Nastja from St. Petersburg have accomplished their volunteer experience. From 2023 the AGfJ had their 3rd volunteer Dasha from Russia. She is active in international youth work and organising local events with their communities in Hamburg and beyond.

European Week Hamburg

For e.p.a. and especially our Hamburg project the Europa JUGEND Büro, the European Week in Hamburg, taking place yearly during the month of May, is a great opportunity to open its doors even wider for young people and invite them to discover more about (European) youth mobility and European topics concerning their lives. Each year we come up with special events to use the stage of the European Week and reach even more (young) people than before.



On 19th of May we invited young people to come to visit our office without appointment and provide them the information for going abroad from our mobility advisors. For those who wanted to stay at home, we offered an Online workshop on European and worldwide youth mobility.

The European Week in Hamburg is a joint attempt by the regional European movement to make European topics and events more visible and to celebrate Europe in the city. Our task was also to draw the attention of "our" young people to activities organised by other providers (to "talk well about each other") and to encourage and prepare them to visit other European events, discussion forums and talks, exhibitions, cinema.

Future development of the network

Stable financial support in 2023 allowed us to invest in our infrastructure and undertake activities to strengthen our Youth Advisory Board, our International Young Peoples Participative Council (IYPPC).

After several years of not having extra funds available to renew our infrastructure whilst planning our international activities using increasingly slower computers, sitting on old and used chairs and at improvised desks, we were able to renew some of those items in 2023. At the end of the year, we also took the opportunity to rent an additional room that had become available at our office in Hamburg in order to strengthen our local youth group and educational work on site. Meetings and activities with up to 25 people in a circle are now possible there without any complex logistical preparations and we are happy to have the flexibility to plan with parallel activities from next year onwards.

One highlight was definitely our IYPPC meeting from 17th - 19th November with workshops, discussions on the current programme, upcoming priorities and activities, the European Elections, Wellbeing and Mental Health and issues they want e.p.a. to focus on in upcoming activities. We stayed at the International Education Centre Elsa-Brändström-Haus in Hamburg, overlooking the river Elbe. It is great to have the opportunity to invite very committed young people who are interested in the active further development and shaping of the e.p.a. network.

The meeting in November included the participation of 11 young people from Albania, Iran, Greece, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Hungary, Portugal, Russia, Finland and the Netherlands and some more young people from the hosting town Hamburg and adopted the following declarations:

Declaration on promoting well being and mental health

“Promoting well-being and mental health among young people is crucial for their overall development. Encouraging open safe communication, providing resources for support, and fostering a supportive, safe and welcoming environment are essential aspects of ensuring their mental health. It’s important to address stigma, educate on coping mechanisms, and promote self-care practices to empower young people in managing their mental well-being.”

We, the e.p.a. IYPPC, recognises the paramount importance of prioritising and safeguarding the mental health of our young people. We commit to fostering a culture that de-stigmatises mental health challenges, encourages open dialogue, and provides accessible resources for support and intervention. Our collective efforts will focus on creating safe spaces, promoting education on mental well being, and cultivating a supportive environment that empowers young people to thrive emotionally and psychologically. By endorsing this declaration, we pledge to work collaboratively to address the unique mental health needs of young people,

ensuring a future where mental wellbeing is a fundamental pillar of their overall health and happiness.

Declaration on Vital Role of Young People in European Elections

“We, the e.p.a IYPPC, recognising the role of the youth in shaping the future of our continent, hereby declare the utmost importance of active participation in European elections. As an active and vital part of change and progress, young people are instrumental in influencing policies that will impact generations to come.”

Acknowledging the Power of the Youth Vote

- Agents of change: We affirm that young people possess the creativity, passion and innovation required to address the pressing challenges faced by our European communities.
- Diverse Perspectives: We celebrate the diversity within our youth, understanding that varied perspectives contribute to a richer and more inclusive political landscape.

Understanding the Impact of European Elections

- Global Issues: We emphasise that European Elections play a crucial role in addressing global challenges such as climate change, social justice, migration, wars and economic stability.
- Direct Influence: We recognise that voting is a direct and impactful way for young people to influence policies that directly affect their education, employment opportunities, and overall well-being.

Encouraging Active Participation

- Education: We advocate for comprehensive civic education to empower young people with knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions in the democratic process.
- Accessible Voting: We call for measures to simplify voter registration processes and ensure that polling stations are easily accessible to young citizens.

Promoting Civic Engagement

- Youth Representation: We support initiatives to increase youth representation in political offices and encourage political parties to include young candidates on their platforms.
- Digital Engagement: We endorse the use of digital platforms and social media to facilitate open discussions, share information, and engage young voters in the political discourse.

In this declarations, we commit to fostering a culture where the voice of young people is not only heard but actively sought after in the democratic process. By recognising and harnessing the power of the youth vote, we strive towards building a stronger, more inclusive, and forward-thinking European Union!

e.p.a. Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place on 18th November 2023. This meeting was called to enable e.p.a. partner young people (under 30) to report and evaluate e.p.a. projects in 2023. Over 30 people from 6 network partners attended, also young people living in Hamburg who took part in workshops, seminars and youth exchanges this year and in the past. We received the Annual Report and agreed the Annual Accounts.



The elections for the e.p.a. board were postponed to beginning of next year, as some of the new candidates couldn't make it to join the AGM. We looked back at the activities of this year, the war in Ukraine and its effect on our work. The IYPPC reported on European Elections, Wellbeing and Mental Health and issues they want e.p.a. to focus on in upcoming activities and came out with two 'Declarations'. We looked forward to new horizons: the youth exchange in Hungary where e.p.a was invited by our partner H52 in summer 2024, and the youth exchange in Bulgaria where e.p.a was invited by our partner Equal Opportunities Initiatives. We introduced Ardit from Albania as our new colleague from May 2023, and our ESC volunteers Veniamin, Eri, Shahzan, Dasha and Sabra.

Seminar in Senec and Bratislava

"Keep your distance? - Embracing Human Rights!"

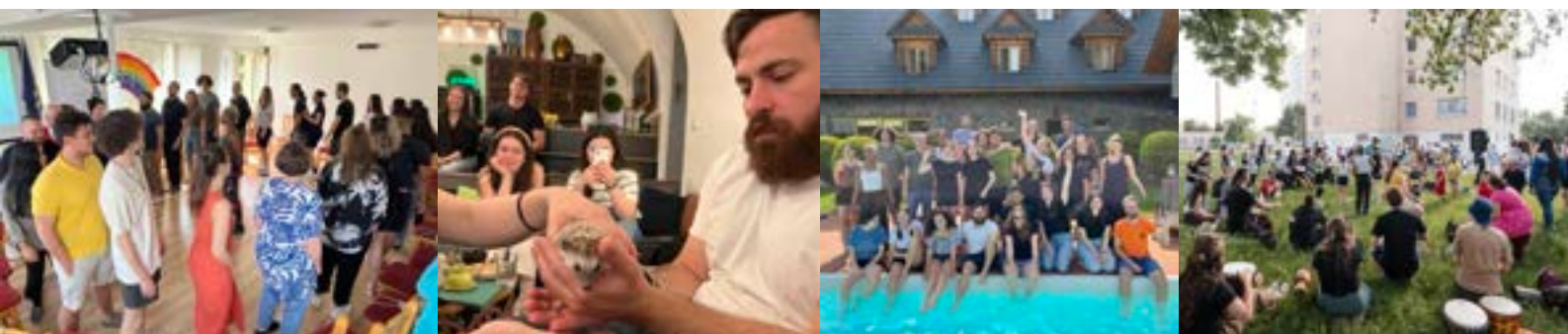
27th May -3rd June 2023



This seminar focussed on the need to address the issues of relationships, identity and sexual wellbeing among young people after the pandemic. It brought together 25 participants from 14 different countries that work with young people from disadvantaged communities.

The workshops were based around the theme and consisted of usable tools and methods to address the former mentioned topics with youths that the participants work with. Not only was there an explanation about different attachment phases for children growing up, there were also playful methods games that helped with "breaking the taboo" around this sensitive subject, such as the Sexpoly game that was introduced and updated. The purpose was to learn with and from all the participants what a safe space actually means and how this empowers young people to feel the possibility to talk about sensitive subjects. There are certain conditions this "safe space" needs and gatekeepers that ensure those conditions are met.

Just outside of Bratislava was a city called Senec where the accommodation was located, very serene close to a lake and close enough for the participants to reach Bratislava for our project visits and the community action day.



Our hosts, Ulita, arranged this community action play day with about 100 people from the community. The participants bundled their strengths and divided the different play activities, there was a field where soccer, table tennis and basketball was played. A table where the children could get their face painted, hair braided and get cool "tattoo's". And finally there was a percussion group who brought 30 "djembe drums" and gave an introduction workshop about basic rhythm to later on create a drum concert with all participants, conducted by the musicians who brought the instruments. A true feeling of community was shared and felt within the international guests and the local people. Big smiles, co-creation and shared positive energy was of the essence on the play day.

With social media being a growing factor in the development and maturing of youths, we discussed how essential it is that they have a safe space to ask

questions about everything they can find on the internet which can be uncensored and sometimes misleading. Gender roles are not fixed, beauty standards are not realistic, sexuality can be fluent and expressing feelings is ok. Participants together with facilitation of the organising team created a new understanding in how we can address these themes and motivate young people to express their thoughts on this sensitive subject.



International Youth Exchange in Portugal

“Let’s open windows para novas esperanças - young people climb the star mountains to explore ways out of fears for our future”

Serra de Estrela & Lisboa, 19th July - 2nd August 2023

During this International Youth Exchange under the theme “Let’s open windows para novas esperanças – young people from 7+ countries climb the star mountains to explore ways out of fears for our future” brought together 57 young people from disadvantaged communities in Portugal, Bulgaria, Finland, Slovakia and from Germany, together with young refugees from Ukraine for two weeks in a safe environment in Serra de Estrela and Lisbon-Oeiras, Portugal.



In a welcoming climate and a spirit of “all different – all equal”, this exchange offered the participants opportunities to work and play with and learn from each other. Raising awareness about their inalienable universal Human Rights, they were encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings, ways to cope with angst and fears and discover new hopes. Fostering a sense of empowerment, this experience supported their potential for actively taking steps towards future’s

hopes. The programme proposed by the young people and the host group, created the conditions for the active involvement of all participants during all stages of projects, especially the workshops, which they have prepared with their groups, sharing their perception of the theme, unpacking some of the contents of their heavy personal rucksacks.



During an array of joint activities: for environmental protection in the mountains and social intercultural celebrations in the hosts' community in Marvila in Lisbon, the participants also shared good practice as European active citizens, disseminating their insights and outlooks during receptions with politicians via their own Radio Zip and social media.

Meetings with the mayor of Celorico de Bera and the mayor of Marvila were organised. The first week we have the historical village of Seia and Celorico de Beira.



The second week we lived in Lisbon-Oeiras and visited our hosting organisation Eco-Estilistas at Marvila neighbourhood in Lisbon. Our young people presented their ideas, thoughts, experiences, fears, challenges and the situation of the young people in their communities. The young participants also organised a huge play activity for children in a city park.

This international youth exchange empowered young people from multicultural backgrounds, strengthened their position to foster equal participation and knowledge of their rights.

International Youth Exchange in Germany

"Don't look away – Let's take a first step ...!"

Tettenborn-Hamburg , 27th August - 10th September 2023



This International Youth Exchange gave the opportunity and welcomed young people from all over the world who live right now in Europe. They came together to exchange their opinion on “Don't look away - Let's take a first step ...!”. This Youth Exchange brought together 60 young people living in 7 European countries, supported by our network partners. The participating groups - all partners in the e.p.a.-network - came from Lisbon/Portugal (eco-stilistas), Budapest/Hungary (H52), Timisoara/Romania (Asociatia Filotimo), Maribor & Ljubljana/Slovenia (Slovenska Filantropija), Málaga & Ceuta/Spain (Almatahiar), Liverpool/UK (Up4change), Hamburg/Germany (BauI) to meet, learn, share, work and play together, staying in two different, both beautiful places: one week in a rural tranquil setting in the Jugend- und Bildungshaus in Tettenborn and the second week in the famous Youth Hostel am Stintfang. With a panoramic view over the Elbe and the port of Hamburg – in walking distance of our hosting partner the BauI in St. Pauli.

"I learnt that the youth can make the change and that if we make the things together we can do a lot of things."

Adam, Málaga

"I learned that friendship is one of the most important and strongest relationships and that it doesn't matter where you come from, what language you speak or how you look."

Ria, Hamburg



This was the first e.p.a. International Youth Exchange, which was supported by EU Erasmus+ Youth programme under the financial framework “Accreditation”. After the preparation meeting from 15-18 June there was a great excitement to prepare the Youth exchange together, explore the proposed theme, collect the proposals from all participants, co-create the programme of activities and on the 27th August the Youth Exchange finally started.

During the first week we had the opportunity to get to know each other better, to learn about each other projects, groups started to facilitate different workshops that were prepared by each group, celebrated what we have in common and gained more knowledge of each other.

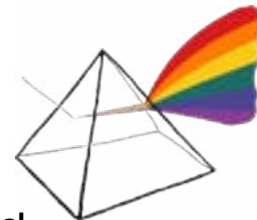


During the second week we went deeper into our topic and we encouraged each other to face the challenges head-on and initiating positive actions. We learned that - emphasises the importance of confronting issues rather than avoiding them - urging people to take initial step towards progress. We organised a youth forum where we had young people from Hamburg coming to visit us during the youth exchange and we shared with them what we had done so far. We also had the opportunity to share with a representative from the German National Agency of Erasmus+.

Our hosting organisation the Adventure playground and Community Centre am Brunnenhof - the 'Bau' - celebrated its 40th anniversary this year – under the motto: “Der Bau ist für alle da!” (The Bau is there for everybody”). We played with the children and in the afternoon the host group had organised the intercultural evening.

It was amazing to see how different the views of the young participants were on the same theme. What is certain, is that we all respected different opinions. Our main goal was to create the conditions, viable for the young people, to think about what is a good life for them and express their way of thinking with the other participants. All participants returned to their countries with more experience, knowledge, tools and enthusiasm that they can use, share and multiply with their friends and community.





International seminar in Malta

“Moored in Malta - Migration, Challenges and Opportunities for International Youth Work”

28th October - 4th November 2023

This international seminar under the theme “Moored in Malta- Migration- Challenges and opportunities for International Youth Work” brought together 31 participants from different cities around Europe - Hamburg (Germany), Rabbat, Zabbar, St Paul’s Bay and Qawra (Malta), Lisbon (Portugal), Sofia (Bulgaria), Thessaloniki (Greece), Bratislava (Slovakia), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Palermo (Italy), Tirana (Albania), Gjakovo (Kosovo), Liverpool (UK), Belfast (North of Ireland), Turku (Finland), Lepoglava (Croatia), Amsterdam (Netherland) and Budapest (Hungary).



The project highlighted e.p.a.’s commitment to participation, democracy, Human Rights and Children Rights education, migration, EU values and policies, overcoming stereotypes and living in dignity. The need for this project became obvious during the year when many young refugees lost their lives on attempting to arrive in Europe for a better life. The war between Russian Federation and Ukraine, the war between Israel and Palestine, 'hate speech' against migrants, and with Malta as one of the first destinations reached by migrants through the last decades and years and facing the challenges on welcoming and hosting refugees, migrants, unaccompanied minors, the need was even ‘bigger’.

Young people, youth and community workers who are working directly with migrants, refugees, unaccompanied minors in their home countries, and feel that they have the power to challenge what they see as injustice took part in this seminar. They shared, learned, experienced the reality of migrants in Malta, and created our International Seminar. As its main objective, this project raised awareness for migrant’s situation, participation, and democracy, respecting the human rights and children rights. It supported the practice of youth participation in communities where migrants live in European communities, where our



"All people should learn how to change perspectives to gain space for new approaches for living together (or at least next to each other) in peace."

Csaba, Budapest

"I have learned a lot, especially about the children rights and refugees. For me I have learned to be outside my comfort zone and be with so many people with different cultures. Especially the indirect way of doing the workshops is something I will try to do in Holland."

Coraline, Amsterdam

participants come from, fostering a sense of empowerment, as well as creating the conditions and encouraging them to raise their voices for their rights and dignity of others. Our use of non-formal education encompassed a playful and creative approach, which ensured a high quality of non-formal and informal learning. e.p.a has found out, that it is especially effective with youth workers who are working with young people with fewer opportunities. We created a welcoming climate and focused on the needs, interests, and issues of all our participants, supporting them in the process to increase their social and intercultural skills. Each participant prepared and presented a Poster about their cities, their communities, the



situation of migrants in their countries, which stayed with us the whole of the seminar. This led to 10 workshops related to the theme of 'Migration'.

During the week participants gained a common knowledge of the migrant situation in Malta, their home countries and Europe, Human rights and European values, understood that political decisions aren't alienated or abstract concepts, that they are not unchangeable. They experienced true participation and they learnt how to respect diversity and felt encouraged to take their new knowledge home.

Study Visit Bulgaria

**"All different, all equal? - caring for opportunities?"
6th -9th October 2023 Sofia, Bulgaria**



e.p.a. – together with our partner 'Equal Opportunities' from Sofia – invited participants in a Study visit to Bulgaria under the motto: "All different – All equal? - Caring for opportunities".

"The study visit to Sofia was a unique and extraordinary experience for me. The exchange deepened my understanding of the challenges that many Roma communities face and motivated me to continue to work for integration.

Gabriela, Hamburg

"The study visit in Sofia was very useful and helpful. Visits to Roma camps/settlements helped to better understand the difficulties and needs of the population. Having the council made up of community members seems a very good practice, and I would love to take it as an experience with me and integrate in my workplace.

Evdokia, Thessaloniki

Equal Opportunities Initiative Association is a long-term e.p.a. partner, advocating for social equality and inclusion, working with Roma communities in Bulgaria.

The program included visits to community centres, dialogue sessions with local initiatives, and engaging workshops. All designed to foster a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the Roma population in Bulgaria. This visit was a valuable chance to get to know concepts how to co-create opportunities, learn from and with each other, in playful ways and strengthen partners working with Roma communities. We visited two big Roma Communities, one in Peshtera and one in Sofia. In Peshtera community we were welcomed by the Council of the community who showed us step by step their work, the commitment to fight for



the community and their rights and building bridges with the local authorities. We met with local initiatives in Bulgaria and we were working on new opportunities of co-creating future activities.

Participants learned about the complexity of access to Human Rights, what are the faces of discrimination, xenophobia and racism and how to discover 'hidden' discrimination and learn from those who have experienced it. The hosts Equal Opportunities Initiative Association and their partner organisations shared with participants how to react in these situations and stand up for other people's rights.

It was agreed to hold a Youth Exchange here in Bulgaria in 2024!



Stop Loneliness - Start Volunteering

"Stop Loneliness - Start Volunteering" is a project, developed with European partners in response to increasing hardship amongst youth, due to isolation and loneliness. Volunteering offers at the very least a partial solution to this problem. Members of the consortium (Ireland, Denmark, Belgium, Croatia, Slovenia, Germany) have all been working in the fields of inclusive volunteering, youth volunteering and youth work for persons with fewer opportunities.



The main goal was to raise awareness about volunteering as a possible means of preventing and alleviating social isolation of young people and as a source of empowerment for youth organisations and organisations involving young volunteers (research, best practice, develop guidelines, policy advice etc.).

We hosted a multiplier event in Hamburg in June. Representatives from our partner organisations from Ireland, Denmark, Belgium, Croatia, Slovenia came to present the results and recommendations to a wider audience of youth workers, community activists and volunteers.

In November the e.p.a. team travelled to Zagreb in Croatia to participate on the Multiplier Event which was organised by D-Kolektiv, our International partner from



the project “Stop Loneliness Start Volunteering”. We had a very interesting panel discussion with representatives from Croatia, Slovenia, Denmark and Ireland, around the topic of volunteering and the situation in our community. We tried to find better ways to support our young people who feel lonely, and also to improve our national system and policy. We also discussed our good examples and practices and how volunteering can combat loneliness. We presented our Web-Campaign “The Voice of Youth” and the importance of youth participation. During our stay, we had the opportunity to visit two organisations in Zagreb, who are working with many volunteers around the topic of mental health. The project will be continued in 2024!

> epa-network.org/activity/stop-loneliness-start-volunteering

Children’s Rights Project

Interactive educational toolkit and online training on Children's Rights for youth workers

In collaboration with ARSIS from Greece, Uit de Marze and Mobile School from Belgium, we have created a free online educational toolkit for youth workers – play workers about Children’s Rights. On this platform you can find many experiential activities, games for children, padlets, animation posters with audio stories and videos, all linked to Children’s Rights.

The main goal of this project was to empower youth workers and promote children’s rights by providing them with pragmatic tools on this matter. By creating an educational toolkit, freely accessible online, we aimed to provide innovative and accessible materials for non-formal education on Children's Rights. To share the results of the project, we created the All Children, All Right(s) toolkit webpage which hosts all created materials.



Through this project, we also wanted to make these tools accessible to many youth workers. We have worked all together to encourage youth workers to start working on Children’s Rights with pragmatic tools for children and young people and can follow a self-paced online learning program on this matter. This tool is an answer to the need for innovative tools on Children’s Rights in non-formal education and secondly provide a very accessible training with limited time investment of the youth worker on a crucial topic.

We aim to empower youth workers through training and education and by offering them a free and comprehensive methodology they can use to address these topics with the children and young people they work with.

During 2023 e.p.a. organised a multiplier event in Hamburg related to this project with 17 participants, youth workers from various organisations, schools, young volunteers, students and partner projects from our network in Hamburg. The purpose of this event was to facilitate the sharing and dissemination of the developed interactive toolkit and online learning programmes. The multiplier event served as an official launch for all the materials, making them freely accessible to all youth workers in Europe.

> street-smart.be/all-children-all-rights

Pact for Solidarity and the Future Hamburg - Kyiw



e.p.a. co-created and supported a meeting in Hamburg from 22.-26. November with delegates from different youth organisations in Kyiw. Part of the bilateral pact for solidarity and future (kyiv.hamburg.de), is the cooperation within the youth sector between the two cities. We welcomed the delegation of our Ukrainian colleagues and organised a programme with getting to know each other, discussions, project visits, sightseeing etc. As one result we are happy that we could invite two colleagues from Kyiw to join our seminar in Finland in 2024 – funded by the EYF of the CoE.

Legacy of the European Year of Youth



The EU declared 2022 the European Year of Youth. Our first youth conference "Hamburg & Europe in your hands", which took place in December 2022 was followed by the 2nd edition on 13th October 2023 in Hamburg. During the year we had evaluation and planning meetings. With our local partners (the Hamburg authority, the Hamburg Youth Council, EuropaUnion, Young European Federalists) we invited young people, who participated in the 1st conference, to see how we

can enhance the format, to define interesting themes to be discussed and how we can create a meaningful dialogue between young people and decision makers at eye-level.



About 70 participants took the opportunity to enter into a direct exchange with politicians and experts, contributing their ideas and visions for Hamburg and Europe. In different dialogue forums - prepared with participation of young people, we focussed on the following topics: local mobility and sustainable public transport, open society, mental health. During the subsequent plenary discussion, the results of the dialogue forums were presented by young participants, responded by the political representatives.

We also supported the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg to set up and facilitate a workshop for young people who won the Interrail Ticket Lottery and got their



ticket to discover Europe. The Lottery was organised and funded by the City and next to the DiscoverEU initiative by the European Union young Hamburgers had the opportunity to become winners.

Take 5 Youth Dialogue Conference

Take 5 is a Youth Dialogue project and network cooperation of youth organisations and state authorities from the five Northern German federal states Bremen, Lower Saxony, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein. Since 2010, we have been organising youth conferences to bring together young people and politicians (MEPs, Members of the national, the regional and local parliaments) for an eye-level dialogue. The Take 5 Youth Conference is part of the EU Youth Dialogue, in which decision makers and representatives of authorities have a chance to learn about the concerns and demands of young people, in order to include them in their decisions and to strengthen the participation of young people in political decisions.

After the last big Youth Dialogue Conference from 1st-3rd July 2022 in the Youth Academy Bad Segeberg, we invited participants to meet in Hamburg for an evaluation/follow-up workshop. We hosted conference participants and some new people to look at the video feedback from politicians and started preparations for the new project.

➤ europajugendbuero.hamburg/take_5

Promoting International Youth Work

Hamburg organised the central national citizens' festival to mark the Day of German Unity. Together with other partners, we ran a pavilion at the festival and informed visitors about international youth work and youth mobility. Our international volunteers offered interactive activities (quizzes, experience reports, etc.). On stage we had the opportunity to present International / European Youth Exchanges. Young people shared stories and experiences with the audience.

e.p.a. supported a regional Expert and Information Day for youth organisations, initiatives and groups to increase their knowledge on funding and to share good



practices of international youth work in order to contribute to the quality development of local and international youth work.

e.p.a. coordinated and supported the creation of catalogue of political demands with members of the Hamburg Network International Youth Work (institutions and professionals from all areas of the exchange scene and youth work) addressing policy makers to improve the conditions for International Youth work in one of the richest cities in Europe - in Hamburg. The catalogue will kick start a political campaign.

➤ internationale-jugendarbeit-hamburg.de

e.p.a. in brief

e.p.a. is an international network of youth and community initiatives and associations with partner in over 40 countries: in Europe (including Middle-, Eastern and South Eastern Europe) South America, CIS countries and Africa.

e.p.a. is an INGYO, registered and based as a “Freier Träger der Jugendhilfe” and charity (e.V.) in Hamburg – Germany.

e.p.a. aims to highlight, confront and challenge the problems of young people living in some of the most disadvantaged cities, areas and regions of Europe. e.p.a. endeavours to provide an opportunity for these young people to discover their potential, experience international friendship and fight against apathy, poverty and neglect.

e.p.a. achieves these aims through the activities of International Youth Exchanges, Study Visits, Training workshops, Seminars, Voluntary Service and International Meetings and in the publication of papers and activity sheets as well as advocacy of the local, regional and national governments of Europe and Europeans Organisations. e.p.a. has been involved in international Youth Work with the Council of Europe since 1977 (46 years) and with the EU with Youth exchanges since 1984 (39 years) and was one of the first NGYOs to instigate the EU YOUTH programmes.

As we look forward to an uncertain future for our young people with war, pandemics and environmental disasters we are confident, that the values shared with the Council of Europe and EYF will enable e.p.a. to continue to support young people from disadvantaged communities co-creating a Europe where we can all live together in dignity.

We would like to thank our supporters: the Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, who made it possible to further sustain, nourish and develop our network



The e.p.a. network was substantially supported and funded by

