

## Travelling for the Future

A methodology of learning the lessons of history and memorial sites

Exclusion, discrimination, racism, violence, extreme nationalism and genocide-denial; we often come across these terms in the media and in politics. Unfortunately they are also part of daily life for too many people.

History has shown where these issues can lead to. The best known example is the Holocaust - the systematic persecution of the Jews, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, members of diverse religious communities, people with (mental) disabilities, political "offenders" such as communists and socialists, and other minorities. There have been genocides in other parts of the world. And there are still people and also governments denying them - or worse, they glorify and commemorate the perpetrators.

Travelling for the Future was initiated in the Netherlands to deal with these issues: it is a one-year project that takes young people from diverse backgrounds on a journey around memorials throughout Europe. Aim is to engage young people in the struggle against prejudices and improve communication between different communities through non-formal learning by experience.

## ONCE UPON A TIME...

During the national commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust and World War II in the Netherlands, a group of youngsters disrupted the memorial service and afterwards destroyed the flowers and wreaths in front of the monument. Simultaneously different groups of youngsters were claiming that the Holocaust was a Jewish invention and several Jewish gravestones were destroyed. The youngsters who were committing these acts of racism and holocaust-denial were from both Dutch extreme-right groups and some youngsters of the Moroccan community. The NGO 'Centre for Foreigners East-Brabant' decided to develop a methodology for these youngsters to meet each other and work at their behaviour. The approach was new and different from methods used up till then by antiracist workers. The idea behind the method is to combine historical education with Holocaust- and multicultural educational methods. The aim is clear: fighting racism and Holocaust-denial among both native and immigrant youth with a long term working methodology. Thus **Traveling for the Future (TtF)** was born.

## WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The project has been initiated at the request of the Dutch Ministry (Youth Information Policy Section) and was developed in cooperation with the former head of the National War and Resistance Museum. It started in 1996 with 3 pilots with more than 100 youngsters and 30 professionals in total.

The methodology draws its lessons from history and memorial sites, specifically those that are relevant to the present day and closely connected with the lives of the primary target group (youngsters) and their supervisors (mediators). If possible the youngsters also meet living eyewitnesses, survivors of genocides, refugees and survivors of slavery history – human interaction is key to the methodology.

## WHO TAKES PART?

Participants of the project are youngsters between the age of 16 and 20 with a different social and cultural background. They work together with supervisors, the mediators, who could be youth-workers, teachers, antiracist and, if possible, police officers. Central to the project is a week long journey to Germany and Poland where participants visit the sites of the former concentration camps Buchenwald and Auschwitz. Here the participants meet with survivors or their children and learn thus in a confronting way about the atrocities of WO II. The months prior to this impressive journey are meant for preparation. Activities involve e.g. anti racist workshops at the local community centre and visits to local and national places of commemoration. In this stage it is important that the people in the group get to know each other and get used to the teamwork. After the journey the group has to prepare presentations on the visit of the concentration camps. This is an important stage: the goal for the group is to collect, share and transfer the acquired

knowledge by presenting it to family, friends, schoolmates and other young people. This can be through regular presentations but also through rap music, photo exhibition, of some kind of performances.

## RESPECTFUL AND POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT

Travelling for the Future is all about teamwork: working together during preparation, activities and presentations is essential. Not just for participants, but also for youth workers and police officers. The methodology is based on mutual empathy and respect within the group. The positive approach towards each other is created through peer-to-peer education, learning by experience, a study trip, self-development and presentation. In this methodology self-understanding and an open approach are the pillars of a change of attitude and mentality.

## 1 PROJECT IN 2 CITIES

Over the years the method has been improved and adapted to the new circumstances. Every year a 'Traveling for the Future'-project is carried out in different Dutch cities and villages. Two cities have even planned within their youth-policy TtF-projects for a period of four years. A minimum of two cities should take part in one project; each city needs 20 youngsters and 3-4 mediators as participants: the exchange between different cities have a stimulating effect.

Below you find a description of the project: how it works step by step and what are the challenges and the pitfalls. The leaflet focuses on the Dutch and Belgian context. It is very well possible that in other countries the project has to be adjusted to suit other requirements.

## STRUCTURE

The project, which lasts one year, is implemented through an 8-phase model.

**PHASE 1:** Financial planning, scheduling and identifying a team

**PHASE 2:** Professional development for participating youth workers and police officers.

**PHASE 3:** Preparatory activities with young people in their youth centres.

**PHASE 4:** Visit to a local or national memorial, where the two groups meet.

**PHASE 5:** Non-formal learning journey to Buchenwald and Auschwitz.

**PHASE 6:** Processing experiences and preparing final presentations.

**PHASE 7:** Visit to the local or national memorial. The two groups reunite and participants rehearse and give feedback on each other's presentations.

**PHASE 8:** Final presentations to the wider audience and planning next steps.

All phases have a relationship to each other, so it is important and in the interest of the end goal that they are properly monitored and evaluated. During the whole project youngsters and facilitators make their own

diaries, this is necessary for them to engage with the process and to remember all they have done for the final presentations. Let the youngsters also use photos and videos, which they can log on the computer. General planning should be discussed during the team-training weekend. Information meetings with the youngsters and possibly their parents precede the real start of group activities, here you explain the planned project. Such activities must simultaneously be taking place in the other city.

## PHASE 1

### PLANNING THE PROJECT

It is a complex project, needing excellent research, planning and management. From the very moment you and your team decide to start TtF, the project begins.

- The costs: this varies if your team members have a salary or are volunteers, so calculate the hours and travelling costs incurred, the cost of renting/buying material, equipment, films etc. For the local visits and the non-formal learning trip include costs for transportation, meals and snacks, lodging and guides. Same goes for



*"Travelling for the Future has really made me think. W  
That human hair is used to make blankets, just sickening .... I rea  
to be able to live in freedom. That we may be who we wa*

the preparatory training weekend, which might also include trainers and training materials. Budget 10% of the total for unforeseen expenses.

- Finding funds: so, you know how much it costs, but where can you find this money? Apart from your "usual" funding sources, such as the local council or municipality, you can try service clubs, organisations who fund programmes in remembrance of the Holocaust, Roma and Sinti or WW II, churches, mosques, peace and European programmes. Approach large inter/national companies and banks; many have corporate social responsibility programmes and

employee volunteering schemes. Some local supermarkets and shops may be keen to help as it brings them good PR, by offering small but valuable contributions like coffee, tea, soft drinks, snacks, but also paper, pens, cameras, etc. Tell them it is a win-win situation; you do something with difficult youngsters who might be causing problems locally and after this project they benefit from less tension in the community.

- The time line: the project takes nearly a year, so proper planning is necessary. Start planning backwards (and forwards) from a date you cannot change; that can be the date of the non-formal learning trip (as you need to book a bus, hostel and guide) or a special event where you want to give the final presentations. Try to do the project within one school year, so you do not have a break in continuity. Your team training can be before summer holidays.
- Partners: you need partners to help you with activities and give advice. Take care: your funders are also partners and they like to be treated as such - they are not just bags with money. Keep them updated with project news; that creates goodwill.



*What terrible atrocities people have had to undergo. realise just now how ungrateful we are. How happy we should be want to be, free in belief and opinion." (Angelo, 16 years)*

### The youngsters

It is all about them. This project is especially for girls and boys between 16 and 20 years old. Youngsters from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; those without or with little education, those from the street, from poorer neighbourhoods, sometimes those who have had problems with the police or might even have been in prison for violent or hate crimes. Youngsters with a migrant or refugee background, Roma or Sinti, Jewish or Muslim, Christian or atheist, those involved in the far right - all are welcome. How do you determine which youngsters are involved and why? First of all, it is important to create a mixed group

of 20 people (from each of 2 cities involved), aim for a gender balance and then a mixture of different communities and groups. It is very important that the number of one identity group is small, so they cannot dominate the rest; consider the group dynamic. The organising team (youth workers and police officers) should create this group together; all youngsters should be known by at least one team member. This selection process happens simultaneously in the other city.

### PHASE 2 TEAMBUILDING

There will be two local organising teams; one from each city. They have to know each other and be a really strong team before the activities start. If possible each local team should have 4 youth-workers and 1 police officer, with at least one female team member - important for working with girls in the project - and one police officer who is involved in the youth section. Good cooperation and trust does not always exist between youth-workers and the police in every country, but for this project it is worth trying to create it. Do not forget you have the same goal: a better future for the youngsters and a good society, but use different approaches; youth-workers by working in a preventive way and police mostly in combating youth criminality. In this project you work to both prevent and combat prejudices, discrimination, racism, antisemitism and violence.

#### Training the team

The success of the project depends on this. Over one preparatory weekend in advance of the project, the complete team (all local teams) come together. You work at teambuilding, define the goals, learn about what racism is, how it starts, how it affects people, about genocides, the Holocaust and the camps you will visit. Discuss attitudes, norms and values and start to talk about possible programme activities. Because it is non-formal learning the team has to develop skills to be facilitators rather than teachers. A facilitator is an instructor who leads the group through discussions based on the material covered; this approach centres on the input of individuals. Facilitators rarely lecture; instead, they help the group to open up to each other and share personal insights and real-life examples. This approach allows youngsters to apply information to their own situations, making the learning more meaningful. You should also train the team how to act in stressful and emotional situations, how to support colleagues, how to behave with emotional youngsters, and then identify who is good -and comfortable- doing which tasks.

### PHASE 3 START

Now the real project starts. This takes about 4 months, with weekly meetings and activities, always around the subject of prejudice, racism, genocides, violence, etc. Every activity has a beginning, middle and end. Imagine a cycle; start by discussing the last event (using diaries), explain what is planned for this activity, do the activity, then discuss it at the end. This could be done creatively through role-play, painting or collages - the working methods depend on your group. In your first meeting with youngsters start with introductions and icebreakers. You

also explain the rules of the project; how to behave, what to do if you really cannot come, the duty to attend and participate, that they have to give final presentations, that the project should have a lasting impact on them. In the second meeting, you could show a film like "Shooting Dogs", that is not directly about WW II, but the Rwandan genocide. Other ideas include; a talk from a Holocaust survivor, or another war or genocide; or an activity where participants talk about their own lives and family history. Of course you should wait for the right moment, when you are sure the group can handle this properly, and start with yourself as an example. A good activity is asking everyone to bring something with them that they do not want to lose: "If I go on a journey, I take ..... with me, it is my most treasured possession". This connects to the Holocaust later in the project. You can also have parliament-style debates, research projects and more.

### PHASE 4 A LOCAL VISIT

Now they are a group, they know each other and about the topics. It is time for the local groups to meet each other and visit a local or national memorial, perhaps a former working camp, prison or execution site. Book a good guide or be very well prepared yourself. Discovering your own local history is the aim here - remember to record it in diaries, photos and videos.

### PHASE 5 THE NON-FORMAL LEARNING JOURNEY

For everyone this is the most evocative moment of TtF; a real journey of 5-7 days (depending on the distance) to Buchenwald and Auschwitz. This will be exhausting for the youngsters and team, with a lot of emotions and new impressions. In this week all that has been discovered over the past 3 - 4 months will become clear. They will make connections between past, present and future, and see their own role in this story. And that is what it is about.

Contact the camps in advance to find out about opening hours, different visiting options and good guides. Explain clearly what your project is, your group and your goal so that you get the best guides and service. Arrange your hostels early on and plan in close cooperation with your bus company. Visit Buchenwald first and then Auschwitz. Why Buchenwald? This concentration camp is one of the first camps, not directly for extermination, but many suffered there. Importantly, here the youngsters discover that it was not only Jews, Roma and Sinti who were seen as "untermenschen", but also Moroccans, Turkish, Yugoslavs, Polish, Africans, Arabs, and a lot of other "non-Aryan" people who were captured and murdered because they were the "other". So here they see that if they lived in another time, they might have been sent there. Share a story of one of the prisoners, if possible from your own country (you can find many online), and maybe contact their children who can tell you more. Do not tell any tales, only real-life stories give the right impact. Collecting information about the camps can be done in Phase 3 through an Internet workshop.

At one of the monuments or in Auschwitz at the execution wall, lay flowers and have one of the youngsters read some text out as commemoration - something many members of the group may never have done. Take time for self-reflection and emotional engagement, everybody has a different way of handling and expressing their emotions, appreciate that and know how to manage it. Every evening evaluate the day with the group in a pleasant and relaxing way. Leave time for recreation; they need it. Take a ball, some board games and playing cards with you.

For the bus journey, take some good music, and films which are connected with the project (e.g. Schindler's List, The Pianist) but also unrelated, light-hearted films - definitely none with violence. In Auschwitz you first visit Stammlager and then Birkenau, each camp takes 4 hours minimum. Try to arrive early in the morning at the gates. The best time to visit these camps is February, March and the beginning of April; it is cold, there can be snow or fog, so participants understand life in the camps better.

You should consider the Holocaust Memorial week around 27 February and the liberation day of the camp - there can be too many visitors around this time, and they could even be closed for state commemorations. A relevant moment is during the European-wide Action Week Against Racism around 21 March.

## PHASE 6 REFLECTION

Now you are back home, and the process of working through your diaries, planning and creating the presentations begins. This takes some time, mostly 4-5 weeks. The encouragement of facilitators is very important here; you might have to push them to create presentations as these youngsters are probably not those who enjoy standing on stage or public-speaking.

## PHASE 7 REUNION

Everyone has planned the concept and prepared material for their presentations in a few weeks. Now the youngsters of the two cities meet up again to show and discuss what they have created with each other. You could do this at the same local memorial that your group first met. Give this meeting a positive atmosphere; it is a small reunion and party, they have a reason to be proud of themselves.

## PHASE 8 PRESENTATION

This is the most important moment for the youngsters, but also for partners, funders, the community and the city council. Here they show and tell in their own ways what they have done in the last year. They can present at schools, youth centres, sports clubs, town halls and maybe also during festivals and commemorations; in this way the learning of 40 people reaches an audience of 500. They could also organise photo exhibitions and film screenings. The project is not over after this; the youngsters use this experience

to inspire future activities, such as making their school a "School Without Racism", or becoming a volunteer for a refugee NGO.

## Testimonies

The experiences that these young people in this project had are unforgettable: "I cried there, dude. You do not know what's coming up". And "It was so quiet, you talked there very quietly, out of respect. You just chill. Truly, not even a bird flies there. I look at people differently now, I have much more respect for others." "This is not a story of the Jews, it is our story".

## Interconnectedness

During the project, the youngsters go through a rollercoaster of emotions and that experience is totally new to them, but same goes for the organising team. And the result? A youth worker says "I saw the moment that strangers became friends, where understanding developed between each other, where seemingly strange customs, cultures and religions were no longer scary but interesting. Such interconnectedness helped to make real the horrors that could be seen in the concentration camps and create a place for openness and sharing".

## Reactions from two mayors

"With a load of stories, memories and emotions, the youngsters returned from Germany and Poland. All their experiences were then shared in their own environment through presentations; each youngster reached at least 10 peers or neighbours with their stories. And that's how TtF is designed; the sharing of experiences created so much more mutual understanding. It is admirable that 40 youngsters directly reached over 500 people in their own way. Our experiences with youth from our cities Roermond and Venlo illustrate the positive impact of the metaphor Travelling for the Future and the usefulness of this methodology in neighbourhood and community projects. It brought together several nationalities, groups and social classes."



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## UNITED for intercultural action

EUROPEAN NETWORK AGAINST NATIONALISM, RACISM, FASCISM AND IN SUPPORT OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

UNITED for Intercultural Action is the European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees. More than 550 organisations from a wide variety of backgrounds, from all European countries, work together in common activities, such as European-wide campaigns. Like-minded organisations have the opportunity to meet each other at conferences and elaborate specific projects. UNITED is and

will remain independent from all political parties, organisations and states, but seeks an active co-operation with other anti-racist initiatives in Europe. Information is received from more than 2700 organisations and mailings go out to about 2300 groups in Europe. Let us know if you want to get involved! And add UNITED to your mailing list!



**UNITED IS SUPPORTED BY:** more than 550 organisations from 48 European countries, many prominent individuals, private supporters and long-term volunteers from Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste, Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service and the EVS, Grundtvig and Leonardo Programmes of the European Union.

Since 1992 financial support was received from various sponsors such as: European Commission (General Budget/Socrates/Grundtvig/Youth in Action Programme/DG Employment Social Affairs/ TACIS IBPP), Council of Europe (European Youth Foundation/European Youth Centres), OSCE-ODIHR, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, World Council of Churches, Olof Palmes MinnesFond, Cultural Council Sweden, Ministry of Education Slovenia, Green Group-, Socialist Group-, and GUE/NGL Group in the European Parliament, European Cultural Foundation, Stiftung West-Östliche Begegnung, Aktionsbündnis Gegen Gewalt, Rechtstextremismus und Fremdenfeindlichkeit Brandenburg, Home Office UK, Ministry of Interior-BZK NL, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs CH, the Matra Programme of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Instituto Português da Juventude, National Integration Office Sweden, Service Nationale de la Jeunesse Luxembourg, LNU - Norwegian Youth Council, Europees Platform Grundtvig, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Federal Social Insurance Office (Dep. for Youth Affairs) CH, Swiss Coordination Office of Youth for Europe, Federal Service for Combating Racism (Fund for Projects Against Racism) CH, Migros Kulturprozent CH, Comunidad de Madrid, Ministry of Youth and Sport of Azerbaijan, The Swedish National Board of Youth Affairs, Rothschild Foundation, Local Municipality of Budapest, Open Society Institute, Youth Board of Cyprus, Jewish Humanitarian Fund, Foundation Remembrance Responsibility and Future, Minority Rights Group Europe, Open Society Foundation - Bratislava, OSCE - Mission to Skopje, Finnish Ministry, Province Noord-Brabant, Final Frontiers Internet, Dijkman Offset and others.

This publication has been funded with support of the Council of Europe (European Youth Foundation) and the European Union (Youth In Action Programme)

This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the sponsors cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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