

“The importance of massmedia in the development of human and democratic rights for minorities with a focus on conscriptsts as a minority in general and as a minority in the defence system”

**Report from Study Session in Strasbourg 2003
9th - 16th of March**

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1. Introduction

The study session was organised by The European Council of Conscripts Organisations (ECCO) and the European Youth Centre (EYC) of the Council of Europe (COE) from the 9th of April to 16th of March 2003.

The theme for the study session, this time taking place in Strasbourg, was “The importance of massmedia in the development of human and democratic rights for minorities with a focus on conscripts as a minority in general and as a minority in the defence system”. The theme was chosen because we find it important to explore ways of establishing relations with massmedia concerning conscript and human rights issues.

On behalf of ECCO

Andréas Wallner, Henrik Wiklund and Joel Nisses
Stockholm, October 2003

The preparatory team were:

Beatriz Padilla Torres, Spain (couldn't be present during the study session and was therefore replaced by Henrik Wiklund)

Andréas Wallner, Sweden

Joel Nisses, Sweden

Henrik Wiklund, Sweden

Antonina Panchenko, Ukraine

Mette Bram, Educational advisor EYC

2. Report of the study session

2.0 Sunday 9 March

2.0.1 Welcome evening

The majority of the participants arrived at the EYC at Sunday afternoon 8 March 2003. The welcome evening started after dinner with a short welcome by the course director of this session, Andréas Wallner. He introduced the preparatory team of this session and proposed some games in order to “break the ice” between the participants and to get to know each others’ names. The persons in the preparatory team were responsible for one game each. For instance one of the games were held in order to get to know the geographical spots from where the participants live.

The rest of the evening was spent with informal chats between the participants.

2.1 Monday 10 March

2.1.1 Opening of the session

The Monday morning was used by welcoming some newly arrived participants and explaining some practical things. The president of ECCO, Andreas Wallner opened the study session with a short speech. After that Mette Bram described the programme in overall view concentrating on contents and overall aims of this session. Also ECCO, EYC and COE were introduced.

2.1.2 Expectations of the participants

Joel explained to the participants how to deal with the expectation task. All were requested to bring forward their expectations concerning the study session. The participants were divided in pairs, and were asked to interview each other in order to make a presentation of yourself. Included in the presentation was a blank part for fears and expectations, where the participants could see how they changed opinions during the week by putting post-it notes there. The presentation were to be put down on a coloured piece of paper and to be stuck to the wall.

2.1.3 Technical information

The tutor of the study session, Mette Bram, explained the technical matters about the youth centre facilities and about Strasbourg in general.

2.1.4 Information market

The participants were given the opportunity to prepare a presentation of their organisation for the

upcoming “information market” (a kind of exhibition) where all organisations got the opportunity to make a presentation of their organisation.

After the coffee break the information market took place. The information market was organised like a workshop whereas every organisation got a limited area to use for the presentation. All organisations got about 10 minutes to carry out the presentation of their organisation.

2.1.5 The international evening

The international evening was very successful. It really fulfilled its purpose to make the participants getting to know each other better. It was also a really nice experience to enjoy food and beverages from all those countries. People were satisfied about how the evening continued with music and dancing.

2.2 Tuesday 11 March

2.2.1 Input on cultural clusters and dividing groups (in plenary)

Mette Bram carried out an introducing lecture about cultural clusters in general and facilitated the dividing into groups to carry out the "team quiz". The purpose with the plenary session was to give some inputs to the participants about cultural clusters. Mette Bram based her lecture on the theory of the dutch psycho therapist, Hofstede.

2.2.2 Quiz and plenary feedback

Joel facilitated a quiz with the purpose to educate everybody about the council of Europe and to make the participants aware of the cultural clusters as a part of the intercultural learning. It was meant as a pre-exercise to the upcoming group work. After the quiz, a short feedback was given to make the participants aware of the problems that can occur when you work with persons from different cultures. Finally they were divided into groups in which they were supposed to work for the entire week.

2.2.3 Expert input: Planning and strategy

This topic was carried out by expert Ms. Elina Kaleja from the advertising agency Image gallery in Riga, Latvia. See attached files. The lecture was followed by question and remarks.

2.3 Wednesday 12 March

2.3.1 Expert input: What makes the news?

This lecture was given by Mr. Dennis Rosseau from the news agency Agence France Presse (AFP). The lecture was very interesting and was followed by many eager questions. Unfortunately we didn't receive his lecture on a printed paper.

2.3.2 Exercise, pro- and reactive press release

Andréas Wallner and Joel Nisses made a presentation of the issue with explanations concerning the difference between pro- and reactive press releases. A few examples were given. The task for the participants was to write two different press releases and then present them to the others. The purpose of this was to prepare for the presentation on Saturday and to raise awareness on the importance of a well made press release. A good example was handed out to the participants.

2.3.3 Mid term feedback

This was an exercise meant to give the preparatory team some feedback on whether everybody was making progress so far. The team agreed that everything seemed to be satisfactory.

2.3.4 Dinner in town

The evening was spent, all participants gathered, on a restaurant in town enjoying a nice dinner together. Before the dinner the free afternoon took place.

2.4 Thursday 13 March

First thing in the morning we all went to the bank in order to administrate the participants financial issues.

2.4.1 Expert input on efficient campaign methods

This topic was carried out by expert Elina Kaleja from the advertising agency Image gallery in Riga, Latvia. See attached files. The lecture was followed by question and remarks.

The rest of the day was spent continuing working in groups with the campaigns.

2.5 Friday 14 March

2.5.1 Input on campaigns (in plenary)

The day started in plenary giving inputs and consultative information on the campaigns.

2.5.2 Work on projects with consultations (group work)

The afternoon was spent working on projects in task groups. The groups were very committed and eager. The work went on smoothly.

2.6 Saturday 15 March

2.6.1 Presentations of projects (in plenary)

During the the time before lunch, the groups made their presentations of the outcom from the work in groups. The presentations were very well accomplished and they revealed that the groups had worked very ambitious with their task. The groups carried out the presentations in a very creative way. For instance one group had produced a video wich was a part of their campaign.

2.6.4 Follow up and evaluation

The last thing that had to be done before the formal part of the study session could reach its end was an evaluation. The evaluation was carried out both as a discussion in plenary and on a questionnaire but also within the preparatory team. The main impressions from both the participants and the preparatory team was that great relations had been established and that everybody had learnt a lot.

2.6.5 Farewell party

There had by this time already been many parties, but this one was the one to beat all the others. The party included all constituents that a great party should. Everybody enjoyed themselves dancing, eating, drinking and listening to music from all over Europe.

2.7 Sunday 16 March

2.7.1 Departure

The majority of the participants left Strasbourg in the morning. Hopefully everybody felt satisfied with the study session.

3 Conclusions

At the end of the session the preparatory team had its own evaluation and concluded that the week had come to a positive ending. The input of what the participants came forward with, was more than expected.

In spite of a small preparatory team and one of the team members late “membership”, the leadership went on in a smooth and proper way. Of course there are things to improve with the leadership, but regarding to the circumstances the outcome was pretty satisfying.

Concerning the mixing-up among the participants, it went very smooth and it did not take long.

Of course everybody missed the presence of participants from Southern Europe. We knew from experience that this has partly to do with the translation chosen by ECCO (English-Russian) and ECCO should consider the further consequences of making that choice.

The co-operation with the tutor, Mette Bram, went very smoothly and was a big help. Mette helped us a lot in the preparatory work. Her flexibility during the week made the necessary improvisations easy.

The study session gathered people from different countries and representatives of different cultures, but with similar goals and willing to help conscripts in their countries and all over the Europe. We met already permanent participants of ECCO study sessions aswell as a lot of newly involved people.

ECCO study sessions attract attention of various, even non profile organisations all over the Europe. As the last study sessions showed, involving into participating non conscripts organisations seems to be very productive. (Fresh views, thoughts)

The topic of the study session was choosen succesfully, it attracted people, who had already experience of cooperating with mass media as well as people who are going to use the received knowledge for the first time.

It is worth mentioning, that there were even some proffessional journalists among the participants. Everybody had an opportunity to share there experrience with others aswell as to get a lot of useful information not only from experts but also from other participants (plenaries, working in the groups).

Very important aspect of succesfull running of the event is atmosphere in the group. It was positive and friendly. During the week personal contacts were established (maybe some joint projects will appear in future).

Especially good responses were made while working in the small groups. During the group work some practically unique ideas were produced. No doubt, they can find realisation in the reality.

Especially important topics that were discussed during the study session: Campaigning strategy (Very practical information, very visual aids. I think everybody found them useful.)

Cultural clusters (Sometimes during intercultural communicating we are facing small misunderstandings, connected not only with language barriers. We should take it into account.).

Experience we got:

- working in the multicultural group
- working out the campaigning strategy
- speaking english/russian

Information we got: (thanks to the experts)

- theoretical, but also very practical

Some remarks for the future: More attention should be paid to the process of the invitation (difficulties with quick visa obtaining for the participants from non EU members countries).

Very interesting initiative – publishing of the newspaper, “Yesterday’s news”, should be developed during further study sessions, as it can provide us with very useful info of running the event. All participants could be involved in.

Special thanks to Directorate of Youth and Sport, the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg with its staff and finally our consultant Mette Bram.