

# **M.A. European Youth Studies**

## **Integrating Research, Policy and Practice**

**A contribution to the development  
of an open area of higher education in Europe**

## Outline

- 1 Background
- 2 Rationale
- 3 Structure and Contents
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# **1 BACKGROUND**



## Where the idea has come from

- A change of the social science landscape
  - Emergence of European Youth Studies as specialist interdisciplinary theory and research field since 1990s
  - Emergence of an international community of research and practice in the youth field
- A changing society
  - Making of a “New Europe” in a globalising world
  - Development of new types of knowledge
  - Increasing diversity and interculturality
  - Open and uncertain futures
  - Modified education-society relations: transformation, reconfiguration as well as new challenges for non-formal education and youth work
- Changing knowledge and skill demands in the youth sector
  - Need for comparative and intercultural inquiries
  - Quality and complexity of youth work and education
  - Professional border-crossing in the educational field and in the youth sector



## What happened so far

- M.A. EYS consortium established in early 2006 with the support of the European Commission/Council of Europe Youth Partnership
- 2006–2009: members contributed time and expertise voluntarily; resources for consortium meetings, development work and administrative support came from several sources:
  - Partner universities and individuals' R&D funds
  - European Commission/Council of Europe Youth Partnership
  - Austrian Ministry of Health, Family and Youth together with the Austrian Ministry of Science and Research
  - Youth Unit of the Luxembourg Ministry of Family and Integration
- Meetings in Strasbourg (2006, 2007, 2008), Mikkeli (2006), Luxembourg (2007), Innsbruck (2008), Ghent (2009)



## What we have achieved

- Mid-2009: award of European Union Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) Erasmus Curriculum Development project grant for two years
  - Under the terms of the LLP grant, consortium universities provide 25% of the development project's budget
  - Seven work-packages covering curriculum and VLE development; internal and external evaluation; information and dissemination; management
  - Seven project meetings in Innsbruck, Plovdiv, Lleida, Luxembourg, Salerno, Thessaloniki and Oslo; plus ad hoc sub-meetings in Luxembourg, Innsbruck, Gothenburg, Plovdiv
- LLP Short Course including a residential seminar co-sponsored by the Youth Partnership in early 2011 in Budapest
  - International virtual faculty
  - Innovative teaching and learning methods
  - Experiential field test of the curriculum in miniature

*Consortium meeting in  
Oslo 2011*



# What will be produced by autumn 2011

## ■ Education-related

- Full curriculum specification and reading lists
- Customised Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) platform
- Working model of international blended learning
- An integrated student mobility model as learning resource

## ■ Information-related

- M.A. EYS corporate identity design (with palette of items)
- Dedicated website in English with varied information texts
- Poster; flyer for download in consortium languages
- Conference proceedings e-report

## ■ Implementation-related

- Joint degree: legal curriculum and cooperation agreement documents with financial plan
- Working joint model for admission and assessment (using e-tools)
- Study guide
- E-reader
- Language policy



## **2 RATIONALE**





## M.A. EYS Principles

- Belief in the importance of intercultural understanding and communication
  - Recognition and value attached to the prior experience and knowledge of students
  - Commitment to learner-centered, active and self-directed pedagogies
  - Appreciation of the critical contribution of young people to the future of Europe
  - Contribution to raising expertise and quality in the youth field as a whole
  - Commitment to an open approach to creating, recognising and sharing knowledge about social worlds and capacities to change them
- These principles derive from a longstanding network of academics teaching and researching in the youth field across Europe and with active support from the key players at European level



## The M.A. EYS is...

- ... a full Bologna Masters in European Youth Studies
  - ... a research-led specialist postgraduate education
  - ... a course founded on bridge-building:
    - An interdisciplinary academic course establishing organic links between theory and practice, between policy and research
    - An integrated Europe-wide joint degree course, transnational in conception, design and delivery
    - An international faculty and an international student body, dedicated to multilingual and intercultural teaching and learning as well as relying on an international set of reference materials
- Key features: transnational, intercultural and interdisciplinary



## **The M.A. EYS is important because...**

- ... it complements and enriches existing provisions and qualifications
- ... it is a distinctive offer: there is no comparable M.A. course
- ... it sustains a community of scholarship and practice, serving to anchor structured dialogue between youth research, policy and practice and contributing to policy-relevant research, evidence-based policy-making and informed, reflective practice
- ... students' M. A. theses generate new knowledge and understanding of the quality and diversity of young people's lives, their circumstances, their ideas, their lifestyles and their prospects



# **3 STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS**



## M.A. EYS Contents

- Young people and Europe
  - Transitions, directions, challenges
  - Institutional focus and commitment
- Research, policy and practice
  - An increasingly connected triangle
  - The case for structured dialogue
- Employment and career
  - Responding to changing labour markets and occupational profiles
  - Cross-fertilisation of field experience
- Personal-professional growth
  - Raising qualification and improving recognition
  - Opportunity for further learning, reflection and new directions



## M.A. EYS Course Structure

- 120 ECTS M. A. joint degree by at least two universities, as developed by a European university consortium
- Four semesters mixing F2F, virtual learning and residential seminars
- Curriculum structured as follows:
  - Five content modules: European Youth Realities and Youth Policy; European Youth Research; Theoretical Foundations; Communication, Management and Leadership; Research Methods (45 ECTS)
  - Electives during mobility semester (20 ECTS)
  - Professional Practice with fieldwork in mobility semester (10 ECTS)
  - Personal and Professional Development (PPD) to run throughout the course (9 ECTS)
  - Synthesis: the reflective practitioner – bringing it all together (10 ECTS)
  - M.A. Thesis Seminar and Defence (6 ECTS)
  - M.A. Thesis (20 ECTS)



## M.A. EYS Sequence of Study from Semester 1-4

Core Modules (CM)	Semester				ECTS
	1	2	3	4	
CM 1: European Youth Realities and Youth Policy					9
CM 2: European Youth Research					9
CM 3: Theoretical Foundations: Social, Cultural and Educational Perspectives					9
CM 4: Personal and Professional Development (PPD)					9
CM 5: Professional Practice (Placement)					10
CM 6: Teaching units selected from existing M.A. degree courses at the mobility semester university					20
CM 7: Communication, Management and Leadership					9
CM 8: Intercultural and Comparative Research Methods					9
CM 9: Reflective Synthesis					10
CM 10: M.A. Thesis Seminar and Defence					6
M.A. Thesis					20
<b>Total ECTS points</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>120</b>

# **4 TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS**





## Blended Learning

- F2F and virtual learning
- Traditional and innovative pedagogy
- Block, residential and distance delivery
- “Home and away” requirements (mobility)
- Course, practice and thesis modules



*Short course in  
Budapest 2011*

## Teaching Methods

- F2F teaching in different locations
- Interculturality and mobility as a learning resource
- Emphasis on self-directed, peer-focused and autonomous learning in mutually respectful settings between faculty and students
- Individual and cluster tutoring
- Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) platform available to students
- Online library and course readers



# **5 TARGET GROUP**



## M.A. EYS Participant Profile

- Balanced composition of groups from different origins
  - Youth researchers
  - Non-formal youth trainers and youth workers
  - Government and NGO administrators and youth services staff
- Preference given to mixed origins and varied experience with critical and creative blend of experience in youth research, policy and practice
- Formal requirements
  - B.A. or equivalent
  - Two years relevant professional experience
  - Two languages including English (at entry: test results at specified level)
- Open to qualified applicants throughout the world, intake 30 per annum ( = 60 students, first and second year)

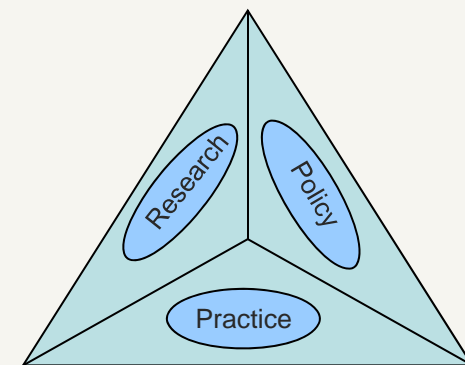


# **6 OUTCOMES**



## M.A. EYS Stakes and Challenges

- Bridging and integrating research and action, theory and practice
- Maintaining quality of learning and teaching as well as opening access to the course
- Creating and sustaining the supply of high quality personnel to support and take forward policy-relevant research, knowledge-driven youth policymaking and evidence-based practice
- Extending and deepening knowledge and competence for diverse careers and professional development in and across research, policy and practice ( = “magic triangle”)



## **M.A. EYS Learning Aims**

- Acquiring knowledge and understanding of youth, youth policy, research methodologies and the European institutional context
- Developing management, leadership and teamwork skills
- Gaining problem-solving competence for informed implementation
- Increasing intercultural competence
- Improving social and communication competences
- Founding “translational skills” between research, policy and practice



## Graduate Qualifications and Employment Prospects

- The M.A. EYS qualifies for an academic or professional Ph.D. programme in social sciences, humanities or educational science and also for cross-border and cross-field careers in the youth sector
- The M.A. EYS creates Europe's first generation of youth sector specialists capable of bridging gaps and forging innovative action across occupational, linguistic and national borders
- The M.A. EYS opens broad professional careers in academic, educational, social, administrative, management and human resource development, including in European and international organisations, NGOs, companies and contexts, such as:
  - Researchers and academics in intercultural comparative youth studies
  - Critically reflective non-formal youth trainers working in transnational and intercultural contexts
  - Administrators and service providers in public and private sectors, specialising in education, training and youth affairs





# **7 CONSORTIUM, PARTNERS AND SUPPORT**



## **M.A. EYS Consortium**

- University of Innsbruck, Institute of Educational Science (Austria), Coordination
- Paissii Hilendarski State University Plovdiv, Department of Applied and Institutional Sociology (Bulgaria)
- National University of Ireland Maynooth, Department of Applied Social Studies (Ireland)
- Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Psychology (Greece)
- University of Lleida, Department of Sociology and Geography (Catalonia/Spain)
- University of Salerno, Department of Political, Social and Communication Sciences (Italy)
- University of Luxembourg, Faculty of Language and Literature, Humanities, Arts and Education (Luxembourg)
- University of Oslo, Department of Educational Research (Norway)
- University of Tampere, School of Social Sciences and Humanities (Finland)
- University of Glamorgan, Faculty of Business and Society (Wales/United Kingdom)

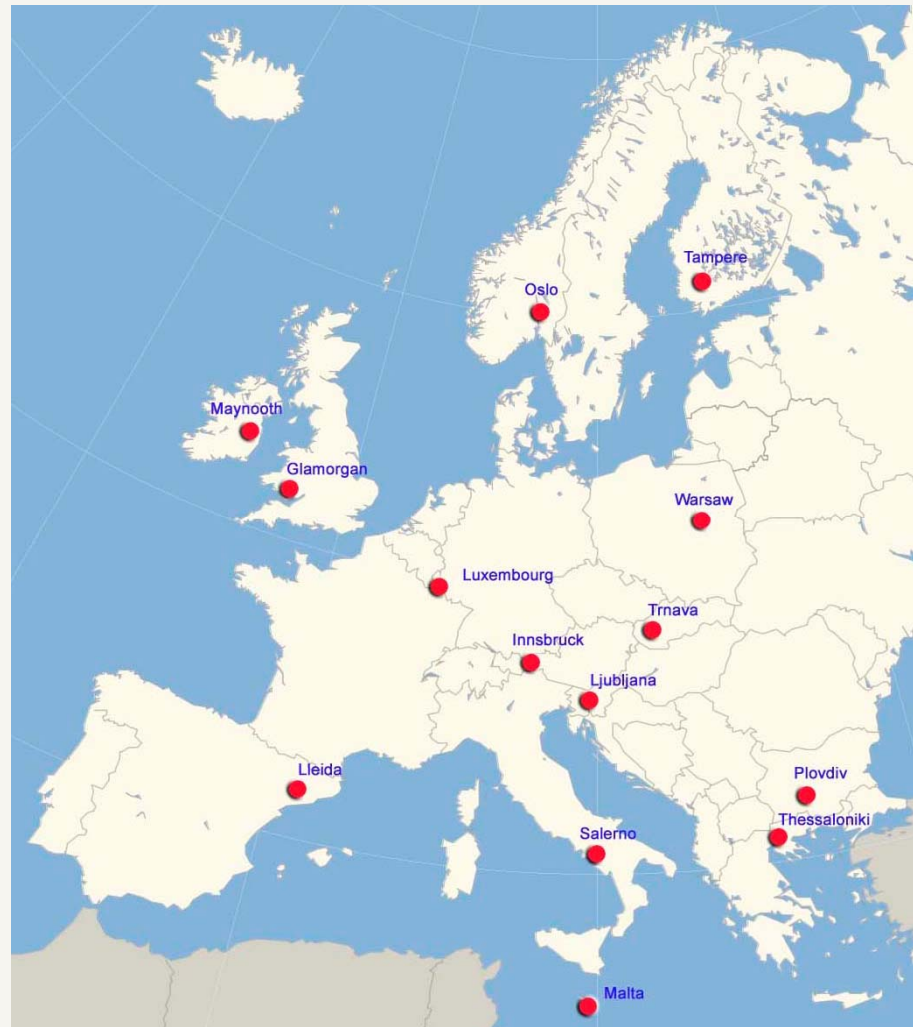


## **M.A. EYS Associate Partners**

- University of Malta, Department of Youth and Community Studies (Malta)
- University of Trnava, Centre for European and Regional Youth Studies (Slovak Republic)
- University of Warsaw, Youth Research Centre (Poland)
- University of Ljubljana, Centre for Social Psychology (Slovenia)



# Geographical Spread of Consortium and Partners



Map source: Wikimedia Commons

## M.A. EYS Support and Advisory Networks

- European Commission/Council of Europe Youth Partnership
- Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sport, European Youth Centres
- European Youth Forum
- ISA (International Sociological Association): Research Committee Sociology of Youth (RC34)
- ESA (European Sociological Association): Research Network Youth and Generation (RN30)

➤ All are represented in an ad hoc stakeholders' group – an embryonic advisory board for the M.A. EYS

*Consortium members discussing with  
Prof. Jim Côté, RC34 (ISA) President,  
Thessaloniki 2010*



# **8 PROSPECTS**



## What we need to make it happen

- Using the so far produced assets in a sensible and efficient way
- Continuing to create open forms of learning – working together to develop innovative and original solutions
- Investing time and energy from the consortium, as since 2006
- Backing from the youth field in the context of the existing support from the European Commission, the Youth Partnership and the Council of Europe
- Winning the formal game of higher education degree accreditation
- Gaining additional sponsors
  - For student bursaries
  - For the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)
  - For new multi-language teaching and learning materials



*Short  
course in  
Budapest  
2011*



**Opening up higher education in Europe is a worthwhile challenge. For all of us.**

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## Further information

- Visit the M.A. EYS website: <http://www.youthstudies.eu/>
- Find out more about the Short Course 2011 VLE platform: <http://dip.youthstudies.eu/>
- Watch the Short Course 2011 video: <http://vimeo.com/20098565>
- Contact us by e-mail: [welcome@youthstudies.eu](mailto:welcome@youthstudies.eu)

