

European Values: Finland's creative concept for engaging youth

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We are in Finland, Lahti, where in 2019 a very interesting project took place. 'European Values' has been a project from the Finnish National working group to bring the European Youth Strategy into the practice. The goal was to get local actors to evaluate how their strategies and actions are related to this European Youth Strategy and if there are still issues missing. The European Values project had different creative practices to evaluate peoples' personal or organisational values and to get to know European Youth Goals. Finland's National Agency contacted the Municipality of Lahti to create a conceptual workshop for this particular project. The aim was to use active methods to understand how European Youth Strategy is linked to the municipal strategies. And so, a team of drama teachers, **Auli Wallenius** and **Lauri Keskiivali** were assigned to find out how to present Europe's Youth Strategy in a different way than just as a PowerPoint presentation. Creativity, innovation and human connection through playfulness unleashed

a whole new level that contributed to the EU Dimension - one of the core values area within the EGL project.

Q: How did this project ‘European Values’ start and what were its main objectives?

A: When we started to work on the project in late 2018, we started throwing around some “wild” ideas how we would approach this project. After our wild ideas, we started to investigate European Youth Strategy with our group of youngsters, consisted of 12 participants. After this we had the idea to visualize 11 Youth strategy’s Values into posters, create a participating game on values and third goal was to make participants think about their own thoughts about the values. The basic idea was to engage Youth workers, decision-makers and youngsters to get information about the new Youth Strategy in some new and fresh way. A way that is creative, collaborative and playful in nature.

Q: What is something about this project that makes it unique?

A: We think what makes this project so unique is that our youngsters from Lahti and in our drama workshop have been so much involved in the making of this original concept. The main ideas in this concept are all and fully made by the participants. So truly the voice of young people is fully represented in this concept. Also I think it is very important that the whole project has been done using drama as a tool for conversation and creating things.

Q: How was this project contributing to EU Dimension in youth work?

A: This project and this concept give a new way to get to know European Youth Strategy by getting it close to youth and their thoughts about these big goals that are written in the strategy. Somehow it makes it more concrete and relevant to you.

Q: Can you summarize the impact of the Project so far? What are the biggest accomplishments and challenges?

A: When we made this concept with our youngsters they brought up this idea that by working on this project they started to feel more European than before. They said many times that EU became closer to them and they started to realize what things are possible through EU. For example, travelling with the help of Erasmus+. This concept is still in the phase of development and the actual impact can be anticipated in the near future.

Q: How is your project empowering youth? What type of skills does it help youth develop through its activities?

A: Through this concept more youngsters would feel that by, for example, playing the EU values game they would be more aware of the possibilities that EU offers to young people. We hope that by making the European Youth Strategy visible, understandable and close to young people, it could help them realize that we are all European and we have a lot of common. In many ways, we can help each other.

Q: What is the vision of the project? How does society with effective methods for development of youth work looks like?

A: With these small steps, youth work (in Finland) could benefit more EU's programmes for young people. We feel that by putting effort in the young people's education, possibilities to influence in politics and quality jobs, the future looks bright. EU's Youth Strategy has many great points that could offer so much for the youngsters.

Would you like to know more about Auli and Lauri? [Read their short introduction as part of the 'Faces of EGL' series!](#)