

THE PLACE AND ROLE OF MOBILITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH TRAVEL

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Abstract: The main objective of the paper is to point out the place held by mobility, as a defining feature of youth's life and activity, in the development of youth travel both internationally and in Romania. In this sense are presented and analyzed aspects like: mobility as a fundamental human right, the features and expectations of different generations of young people, the two main forms taken by mobility among youth, learning mobility and mobility for volunteer purposes, as well as the role played within the development of activities specific for youth travel.

Keywords: youth, mobility, youth mobility, youth travel.

Introduction

Building civil society requires cooperation between all the involved actors, including youth, who, by participating in social processes, have the opportunity to achieve their own vision of the society in which they live. Young people must feel like they are really playing a role within society, otherwise it's difficult to involve them in various activities specific for their age. They could be actively integrated within modern society and could influence social events through their actions and through the materialization of their ideas, first as pupils or students in various forms of education through school programmes or extracurricular activities, and afterwards as beneficiaries of youth organization programmes or as their members or as members of political parties. The most common activities run by youth organizations, actively contributing to community development, are: cultural programmes, environmental protection actions, activities related to protecting and promoting human rights, managing leisure time, sports events, street actions on various themes, etc. A major problem facing youth is the lack or poor channels of communication between youth organizations and local administration.

Mobility – a defining feature of the life and activities of young people in modern society

Although when they are young, people are full of enthusiasm and energy, very open and ready to anything that is new, with a unique vision of the future, accumulating knowledge and using modern means of communication, their presence and quality are barely visible and present within the representative bodies of society. Empowering youth and creating favourable conditions for them to develop their skills, to work and play an active role in society are essential in order

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to ensure the economic and social development of countries, especially in the context of globalization, of economies based on knowledge and of the aging population.

If young people are allowed to participate in a constructive manner in their communities or countries, they become prepared to play a positive role when they are adults.

Mobility may be defined as follows – young people moving and spending time in a different country to study, to train, to take internships or work as volunteers – and represents one of the fundamental ways in which young people can strengthen future chances of employment and their personal development.

Mobility is a fundamental human right, stipulated in article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 25 of the Romanian Constitution, representing, at the same time, the defining feature of youth's life and activity.

To understand the youth mobility process is very important to know characteristics and expectations of different generations of young people. Some experts concerned with studying youth and current generations have discovered certain cyclicity in the succession of generations. Therefore, there are four cyclical *patterns* in American generations: *the prophets* (led by moral values and the fight for beliefs), *the nomads* (adventurous and diverse), *the heroes* (powerful and fans of institutions) and *the artists* (undecided and tried by emotions and inner conflicts). Knowing the features of these four types of generations is much easier for the players on the youth travel market to meet the tourism needs and desires of young people.

Despite the circulation of various definitions for youth ("Baby Booms" – born between 1943-1960, "Generation X" or "The Thirteens"[6] – born between 1961-1981, "Children left home alone"[5] "Aging Bart Simpsons" "[10], Generation Y - born after 1981; "Generation 2000", "Generation MTV or even "Erasmus Generation"), tourism operators have disregarded this segment to a certain level, and it was even said they don't understand young tourists. Since the 1950s, the "baby boom" generation was the one who received the best the promotions done by the tourism market in the post-industrial age. The Boomers generation was the dominant generation in terms of the targeted market segment: being "children" in the '50s, "teenagers" in the '60s, "hippies" in the '70s and "yuppies" in the '80s. Tourism operators realized that "the importance of this generation we call Baby Boomers has often made the difference between success and failure for a marketing concept" [5]. Despite the continuing importance of the baby boomers generation, it's important to remember that *Generation X* is also a segment with important tourists. This category of population exceeded the number of "baby boomers" in the United States in 1980, Generation X representing 78.4 million people or 30% of the population in the year 1995, while the boomers had a lower percentage of 26%[5]. These demographics should be considered by the organizers of tourism products, including by the providers of tourism services, especially now when new regions that generate tourism products with a "younger" profile have emerged,

such as Asia. A new category of young tourism consumers is emerging as a result of the globalization, which, at its turn, is stimulated by technological innovations and the birth of a global youth culture. The social and demographic changes also determine the rise in the importance of the youth market. Thus, because many people put off starting a family and having children, a decline of the nuclear family was recorded, this social trend being reflected in the rise of the tourism products' number meant for unmarried persons, especially young unmarried people. Although the families' number will increase again in the future, two thirds of the tourists don't currently have children [10]. "Bart Simpsons" are a sub-group of Generation X and represent the people with ages between 16 and 24, who had an "equal type of personality" or "patterns of behaviour and beliefs that are dominant in a group of people born in the same time period"[5].

Millenials or *Generation Y* refers to the generation born between 1977-1980 and 2001, whose significant weight is just entering college, meaning the generation of young people and teenagers exposed to new communication technologies, a generation that is starting to clearly be and in unexpected ways different from the previous one. *Generation Y* is the most frequent term used on academic papers, teenagers preferring the name "*Millenials*"; other names for the same group are: *Net Generation*, *Click Generation*, *Nintendo Generation*, *Google Generation*, *iGeneration*. It is a large and ethnically diverse generation, counting very well trained young people, in whom a lot was invested regarding education. It's important to study the features regarding technology and learning that are at the base of the generation Y's profile because their effects are immediately felt at the level of the institutionalized education [3]. These features are more easily transferable towards other cultures than any other time (for example, *Yahoo Messenger* and the use *habits* of this program are now similar in all the cultures). The challenges faced by young people in the growing process have become more complex than the ones that had been faced by their parents. The transition from school to work is complicated. Half of the current professions require high qualification, and others require much more varied skills than the ones needed in the past. About a quarter of European youngsters do not have the skills and abilities required by the labour market. Currently, in many member states, one in three young people is still unemployed after graduation. The prospects provided by education and the ones regarding a job must be improved. At the same time, volunteer activities are important in ensuring the active involvement of youth in society.

Learning mobility and volunteer mobility among youth

Mobility among youth takes two basic forms: *learning mobility* and *volunteer mobility*.

Mobility for learning purposes, meaning transnational mobility with the purpose of acquiring new skills, is one of the fundamental means by which individuals, especially young people, multiply their job opportunities and promote personal

development. Today, we may even talk about a new generation of young people, namely the Erasmus Generation [4], whose defining feature is to study abroad and which has a mobility that generates extremely important benefits. Studies confirm that mobility for learning purposes improves the quality of the human capital, because participants have access to new knowledge, develop their language skills and broaden their cultural horizons. Furthermore, employers acknowledge and appreciate these benefits[5]. Those who showed mobility during the education period will more likely be mobile later, after starting their professional careers. Learning mobility played an important role in creating education and learning systems and institutions, in developing their European and international dimensions, as well as in improving their accessibility and efficiency. It may also improve Europe's competitiveness, supporting the construction of a society based on advanced knowledge and contributing to reaching the objectives established by the Lisbon Strategy regarding economic growth and employment.

Given that the strategic objective of the European Council is to transform the European Union in the most competitive and dynamic economy and society based on knowledge in the world and to transform education and learning systems of the member states in a reference point in terms of quality at global level, as well as to create a European area of research and innovation, youth travel plays a crucial role in achieving this objective. All the decisions of the European Parliament and of the European Council to develop action programmes for the 2007 – 2013 period in education and lifelong learning aim to *develop mobility*; at the same time, all the European programmes and actions in business research and policies, as well as structural funds, have the same objective. In this regard are proposed five key principles that govern the preparation, unfolding and assessment of the mobility period of a European youngster in a different member state, namely:

1. Mobility concerns all European youth, regardless if they are pupils, students, apprentices, volunteers, professors, young researchers, trainers, workers in the youth sector, enterprisers or employees.
2. Firstly, mobility means physical mobility, which means living in a different country in order to study, to participate in an internship, to engage in community service or to benefit from additional training in the context of lifelong learning. Nevertheless, "virtual mobility", namely to use information and communication technology in order to develop partnerships or long distance exchanges with young people from other countries, as part of an education or training project, might significantly contribute to mobility, especially in the context of education institutions.
3. Mobility shouldn't be perceived as an end in itself, but as a privileged mean to consolidate European citizenship and competitiveness, to extend and enrich young people's training and experience, to develop their ability to adapt and find a job, as well as to increase intercultural understanding by learning foreign languages.
4. In order to be successful, an ambitious and transverse mobility policy in Europe should awake the desire for mobility in all young people, it should aim that a

mobility period in a different country gradually becomes a rule for everybody and grant adequate financing in order to achieve that goal. Students should receive special attention, because they have special needs and live in a specific socio-economic environment and need additional financial support. This type of policy should also emphasize the instruments used to prepare and support mobility, as well as acknowledging the results of learning obtained as a result of mobility and should promote mobility development among teachers and trainers, who play a key factor in these arrangements.

5. This mobility policy targets especially intra-European mobility, but it may also contribute to the development of mobility between Europe and countries outside Europe.

In the context of the current global economic crisis, the European Commission emphasizes that investments in the education and professional training system are crucial. The Commission also highlights that although it may seem tempting to direct resources towards other sectors, it is precisely in periods of economic difficulty when investments in knowledge and professional training should be ensured. Therefore, mobility of learners should be an integrating part of the new direction meant to consolidate Europe's ability to be innovative and competitive at international level. In this manner, the immobility paradox might also be refuted, which is that even in a severe economic crisis there are countries and sectors with unfulfilled jobs due to the shortage of skills.

The population represented by young people aged 15 to 25 in the 27 member states of the European Union counted 75 million persons on January 1st, 2007, young people who have or will have the opportunity to travel for educational or professional reasons, for sports activities or simply to have fun and rest. Given the fact that a part of youth is not able to practice tourism due to financial reasons, it's essential that the representatives of international organizations and the governments of the European Union act to include youth travel in their policies.

Learning mobility has other positive aspects. For example, it might contribute in fighting the risks of isolationism, protectionism and xenophobia that occur during periods of crisis. It might also contribute in promoting a sense of identify and European citizenship among young people. At the same time, mobility stimulates circulation of knowledge, which is a key element of the knowledge-based future of Europe.

Current European programs, devices and initiatives regarding mobility provide assistance to European youngsters in a wide range of situations and contexts. Nevertheless, leaving to study abroad is still an exception rather than a rule, and is more accessible to certain categories, such as students, than other categories, such as vocational school students and apprentices. In 2006, approximately 310.000 young people studied abroad through European programmes; this figure represents only 0.3% of the EU's 16-29 age group, which shows that more could be done in this area [8]. The Leuven Communiqué, adopted on April 29, 2009 by the ministers responsible with high education in the countries that participated in the Bologna

process, stipulates that by 2020 at least 20% of university graduates in the European area should have participated in a study or training internship abroad [7]. On November 2008, the European Council concluded that “each young person should have the opportunity to participate in some form of mobility, either during their studies or training, or in the form of a professional internship, or as volunteers” [2].

Volunteer mobility is just as important as learning mobility. To ensure active involvement of young people within society, volunteer activities are very important. Optimum cooperation, as well as exchanges of good practice, may contribute to the development of this type of activity. Volunteering activities are a valuable informal learning experience – learning outside the classroom – which allows youth to acquire abilities and facilitates their transition from education to the labour market. By volunteering, young people develop values like mutual understanding, dialog, sense of solidarity and active citizenship. However, it must be emphasized that volunteering is not a substitute for finding a paid job. Volunteering is different from employment because it is usually not paid (except pocket money and expenses) and covers only a limited amount of time, generally a few months. Cross-border volunteering provides young people with a special experience that might have important benefits for their personal development.

There is a variety of concepts, definitions and traditions regarding volunteering, but what is the same across Europe is that people come together anywhere to help others, to provide civil protection and social inclusion, to support those in need, to protect the environment and to preserve the cultural patrimony, to support human rights or actions that ensure a decent life for everybody. Both society as a whole and volunteers have something to gain, and social cohesion is substantially consolidated. Volunteering contributes to building a European identity rooted in the mentioned values and helps create mutual understanding between the members of a society and across Europe. Volunteers reflect the diversity of the European society, including people of all ages, women, men, employed and unemployed, people of different ethnicities and of all nationalities.

Over the past year, the European Commission launched an initiative to create more opportunities for young people to get involved in volunteer activities across Europe. This initiative was aimed at young people from the European Union, under 30 years of age, who wish to engage in volunteer activities in a country other than their own.

Young Europeans have a positive attitude towards programmes that encourage volunteer activities, 74% believing that this type of programmes represent an adequate way to increase their participation in society [11]. Over 100 million Europeans (3 in 10 Europeans are active volunteers) participate in volunteer activities and actions of solidarity that add more quality to modern society. At European level, there is the “Youth in Action” programme, which provides opportunities to become a volunteer, among them being the European Voluntary Service in which 30.000 young Europeans enrolled between 1996 and 2006. It

enables young people to become full-time volunteers for up to one year in another country participating in the programme, but, nevertheless, the demand for cross-border volunteering among European youth far exceeds the capacities of the European Voluntary Service. Still, 7 in 10 people don't participate in volunteer actions, many of them having difficulties like: lack of information on how to become a volunteer; time constraints; poor economic resources and the feeling they can't "afford" to provide volunteer work; the negative image of volunteering, rooted in the period when volunteering was rather a "mandatory duty"; discrimination; discouraging legal provisions and the lack of a legal framework; lack of protection measures against risks involved in volunteering; visas or other barriers for citizens outside the European community – just to name a few of these obstacles.

The reports of the EU member state regarding the implementation of the common objectives adopted for volunteer activities show that the exchanges of good practice, the activities of mutual learning and the assessment instruments would bring added value to the development of the volunteer activities [9].

To meet the desire of the European civil society organizations to highlight the considerable potential of volunteering, as well as to mark the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers, organized by the United Nations in 2001, the European Commission declared 2011 the European Year of Volunteering. The European year will raise awareness about the importance of volunteering, will promote recognition of volunteers, will encourage debates and experience exchanges in order to improve the political framework of volunteering and to create better conditions for volunteer activities across the European Union.

While the present general conditions for European young people are favourable – freedom and security, prosperity, longer life expectancy – the fact that many of them will not prosper is a growing concern. High poverty rates among children, poor health, school abandonment and unemployment among youth are aspects that justify the need to invest more in European youth and from a younger age [1], not only financially, but also politically and socially, through family, NGOs, professors and employers. The development of horizontal strategies for young people must be a priority – for Europe and for each country – covering a wide range of action areas, such as: education, employment, health, business, culture, youth and sports. Social exclusion of young people determines high social and economic costs and should be stopped.

The challenges faced currently by young people are complex and diverse. There are many opportunities to learn and to participate, but the paths are less defined. Maintaining growth and prosperity in Europe, promoting at the same time social cohesion and sustainable development, depends on the full contribution and participation of youth, even more so because their number is declining compared to total population.

Since not all young people have financial resources adequate for mobility, various means to help them have been developed in Europe. Thus, the European Council and the International Union of Railways set up in December 1994 a fund to encourage mobility of disadvantaged youth in Europe, which is intended to cover only travel by rail for a group of participants (minimum 10 persons) that take part in international learning activities and don't travel for tourism purposes.

Summary

In conclusion, it may be said that mobility represents a key instrument for the personal and professional development of young people, for the development of a sense of European citizenship and conscience, through a better understanding of cultural and language

diversity. To facilitate and develop youth mobility, various cultural and educational exchanges and study tours and visits should be organized, by informing young people about study, work or travel opportunities in different countries than their own. Mechanisms and systems should be put up in place for a longer period of time to ensure the integration of young people in community development, and each new generation should represent creative driving impulses for the modern society.

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MOBILNOŚĆ A INTENSYFIKACJA PODRÓŻOWANIA MŁODZIEŻY

Streszczenie: Celem tego artykułu jest wskazanie roli jaką odgrywa mobilność, która cechuje życie i działalność młodzieży, w rozwoju podróży krajowych (Rumunia) jak i zagranicznych. W tym kontekście zostały zaprezentowane i przeanalizowane następujące aspekty: mobilność jako podstawowe prawo człowieka, cechy charakterystyczne i oczekiwania różnych pokoleń młodych ludzi, dwie najczęściej wybierane przez młodych ludzi formy mobilności: poróżowanie w celach edukacyjnych oraz wolontariat.

流动性在青年旅行中的地位和角色

摘要: 本文指出流动性成为青年生活和活动的主要特点, 和青年旅游业在罗马尼亚和国际性的发展。在此基础上我们提出并分析了诸多方面, 例如, 流动性作为人的基本人权, 不同年代的特点和期望, 青年人的两种主要流动方式, 学习流动性和以作为志愿者为目的的流动性以及发展青年旅行的活动。