

EUGANGS

A Model European Collaboration



new skills and competences for people
living and working with gangs and
youth crime across Europe

Introduction

EUGANGS is a collaborative project delivered by those working and living in gang and youth crime environments across five European Countries. Between 2013 and 2016 a transnational team worked together to research, develop and accredit at national level a new vocational/professional qualification for people working with and experiencing gangs and youth crime. This anthology brings together some of the highlights of the project. You can find the full story at: www.eugangs.eu.



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EUGANGS - The context

The 'gang' emerges primarily as a phenomenon of the 20th century, and of the North American city. However in areas of concentrated social and economic deprivation within EU countries, the conditions are now present to make the formation of deviant youth gangs possible. Partners in Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Romania and the UK researched the gang and youth crime situation in their own localities. The following issues were found to be common across all:

- Rising, and in some states, enduring youth unemployment is creating the conditions for youth disaffection, with recognition that environmental and familial pressures place many young people at risk from varying forms of radicalism and criminality.
- Gang activism and gang formations appear across all partner states with common threads of urban marginality, immigration pressures, declining social mobility and familial constraints present as shared factors.
- Media sensationalism, distortion, exaggeration and stigmatisation are present in the representation of 'gang' activism across all partners with an over-focus on reaction, often reflecting 'moral panics' around immigration, family and peer relationships. Public policy responses are invariably reactive.

In countries blighted by gang activism there is strong political discourse increasingly constructing 'gang' solutions through crime control and criminal justice contexts, not in the rectifying of adverse social conditions, or in devising collaborative mechanisms for social action to build stronger learning communities with enhanced capacity to challenge gang associational recruitment, retention and disruption.

(Source: [Eugangs Summative Research Report](#))

National differences - Greece

Greek juvenile correctional services are ill-equipped to face emerging challenges as one-third of students (boys and girls) have fallen victim to violence in schools. There is a 'serious problem' associated with the state's capacity given 'the complete lack of services for young offenders' care in our country...' Although the Greek judicial system does not recognise juvenile gangs, there is unambiguous evidence of intra-ethnic gang tensions (Roma, Russian and Greek) and far right activism associated with Golden Dawn that draws in disillusioned and vulnerable youth.

The training needs

Findings to inform the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) were not straightforward. There was a broad spectrum of concerns that can be summarised as:

- Support for framing nationally specific content across relevant socio-psychological approaches
- Prevention strategies that include effective approaches, tools and resources
- Access to programmes of learning available to develop professional skills relevant to this agenda
- Working safely and safeguarding in gang / high risk contexts

The majority of partners also prioritised the following areas for development of their learning:

- Interpersonal-Communication skills
- Reaching communities – engagement techniques and approaches consistent with asset based community development principles

Section 3 of TNA - Policy in practice (Police, social workers, teachers)

Romania	We have a strong network coordinated by the Education State Inspectorate, but it is a poor and un-professionalised coordination because they are focused on other challenges in education, other than gang prevention. Despite this, the members of the network are very active.
Greece	There are no special national or local interventions in Greece about youths and gangs. There is a juvenile prison, special justice system for juveniles and a few NGOs, though none work collaboratively. Some social workers promote this kind of procedures (work collaboratively)
Italy	The presence of a strong networking capacity in several communities allows for: a well structured base for intervention; effective prevention activity; strong involvement of schools, volunteering organizations, and may other actors in preventive and recovery actions; and, a real bottom-up action in the decision making process.
UK	One group were very sceptical about the impact and motivations of many government initiatives. There was an awareness of the Ending Gangs and Violence initiative but, there was little knowledge or support for the impact, if any, that this has made. Another partner identifies collaboration within interventions.

(Source: [Report on the findings from the Eugangs TNA questionnaire](#))

Project and delivery partners

Cyprus – Eurosuccess

Innovation consultancy, partners included Social Workers Association, Cyprus Prison Dept, Commissioner for Children's Rights



UK – University College Birmingham

Higher Education Institution, created Community of Practice, partners included Five Steps Forward, Fathers Against Violence, Activating Creative Talent



Greece – Action

E-learning specialist, partners included Theocharidion, KEDDY, Apokoronou municipality, Second Chance School of Chania



Romania – CPIP

Innovation consultancy, partners included Timis County Police, Psycho-pedagogical Resources and Information Centre, Timisoara Prison



Italy – CEIS

Youth engagement specialists, partners included CESAV, Comune di Modena, Ministry of Education, Tra Compi e Quadre



UK – Walsall College

Further Education College, partners included Wolverhampton Citizens for Change, Walsall Police, Sandwell Women's Aid



The 90 hour VET programme

The aims of the 90 hour VET programme are that the learner:

Policy - understands national policy relating to gangs and the local frameworks in which they are applied.

Interpersonal Communication - has access to a toolkit for effective intervention and communication in a gang related environment.

Safe working - is equipped with the knowledge and understanding to work safely in a gang-related environment.

Social-psychological perspectives - understands and applies relevant perspectives drawn from social psychology in order to facilitate improved practice in working with gangs.

Social factors – understands the social contexts, factors and forces that create, sustain and promote gangs and gang membership.

CEIS social factors session



Eurosucccess policy session



Suggestion for delivery from the Trainer Handbook

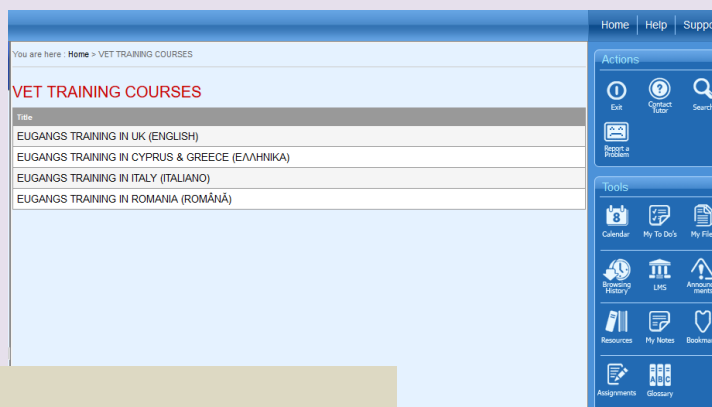
Applying what students know to the theory

It will always be easier for students to understand the theoretical concepts and models introduced on the course if they can link them to their own lived experience. One way to do this is to ask students to think of a young person they have lived or worked with who has been involved in anti-social behaviour, gang or criminal activity, or to think of a critical incident in their life, and use the model or concept to explain what was happening. For example, when you are looking at understanding the nature of the gang a young person belongs to, you can present students with

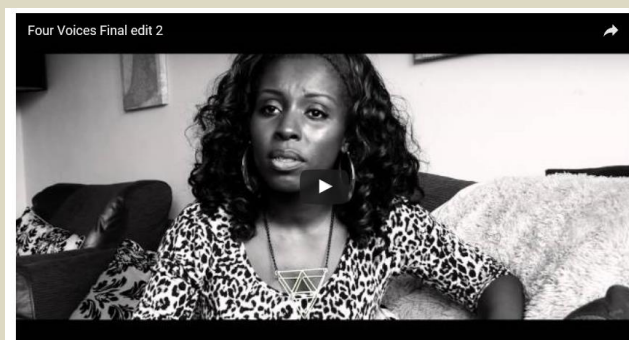


John Pitts' typology of gangs⁵, and ask them to select which gang type most closely resembles the young person's gang, and why they say that. Similarly, students can use Michael Argyle's leadership and communication model to consider the behaviour of an individual and what that says about their personality and degree of affiliation to the gang or youth group.

EUGANGS e-learning platform



Sara Myers' Four Voices video explores female engagement with gangs



The trainers

An expert trainer programme was held at St George's Hub in Birmingham in the summer 2014, from which graduates went on to design and deliver Train the Trainer programmes in their own countries. In this way teams of trainers across the partner countries were prepared to deliver the 90-hour VET programme.

Tassos Trattonikolas training trainers in Cyprus



CPIP trainers prepare



Jason Sylvester delivers keynote at UCB's national conference



"The project helped me deepen my knowledge about juvenile gangs and deviant behaviour in my country and also in other European countries.

Thanks to the training of trainers that I attended in Birmingham I could see different methods of training and of working in groups in a pleasant international atmosphere. I could appreciate the very interactive way of conducting the training that I tried to adopt in our national training of trainers

The Eugangs project helped me increase my skills and knowledge of juvenile deviance and ways to engage with it, but also my expertise in planning, organizing and conducting training about social themes."

ELISA PIGHI – CEIS TRAINER

The participants

Participants on the EUGANGS VET programmes came from a range of settings, including neighbourhoods affected by gang and youth violence, prisons, police forces, probation services, mentoring services, social work, education, the medical sector, counselling services, youth offending services, family services, housing services and fire services.

CPIP Approach to recruitment

Each of the trainers delivering the program had the task to bring at least 3 participants to the training and also CPIP advertised on Facebook for a number of 5 open enrolments. We have targeted professionals working in public or private institutions, having responsibility for public safety. We wanted professionals experienced in inter-institutional cooperation, capable of creating a safety network, and capable of implementing the learned skills at their workplace as soon as possible.

We had 23 participants from Prison of Timisoara, Community Police, Road Police, Probation Service of the County Courthouse, Child Protection Agency, Juvenile Detention Center, Employment Agency, Social Services Agency, School Counselling Agency, NGOs

Participants on the Walsall College programme



“The subject matter in the interpersonal communication sessions really caught my attention. Very useful to me-as a professional social worker- especially the part referring to prevention and how to also respond to acts of violence in the workplace”

“Most interesting was the part where we discussed about the consequences of victimization in childhood that create the framework for future delinquent behaviour”

“The training was a great opportunity to get to know “from the inside” such a serious and contemporary issue. I would definitely use what I learned at work. I now feel confident to organize school-based prevention programs and to manage aggressive situations.”

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK ON THE ACTION PROGRAMME

Participants on the Action programme



“The reason I chose to do the Working with Gangs Course is because I have sons and one of them has had problems with the police and friends. Also the area I live in is known as a bad area so I was curious to see what this course would teach me.

The course was a big eye opener I learnt so much. I was from the community a mother and having professionals on the course helped me see their take on young people, also I was able to network. I learnt that young people do not always join gangs through choice. I know see how policy is formed and theories. Young people need love, to be understood and not to be judged. They are under so much pressure and many suffer in silence.

Following on from this I am now taking a degree in Youth Communities and Families leading to a mentoring job with young ex- offenders. Also now I attend seminars on youth gang violence and anything else that will benefit the community and extend my knowledge.”

PARTICIPANT ON UCB VET COURSE

Participants on the CPIP programme



Making connections through EUGANGS - Cyprus

An important feature of EUGANGS has been the opportunities it has provided participants to make connections with a range of services and existing projects. In Cyprus, participants engaged with the Daphne programme, whose aims were to divert youth from substance abuse and anti-social behavior. The team met young people where they gathered in the Strovolos Municipal Park, providing activities such as sporting events and movie screenings, alongside a series of workshops to strengthen personal and social skills. The project was a test bed for the value of practices and theory introduced through the EUGANGS training programme for the specific context of Cypriot disengaged youth. Participants learned in particular the value of developing interpersonal communication skills, speaking with young people on an individual level, and supporting them and local residents to engage young people who were hard to reach and absent from regular sessions.



Making connections in the Black Country, UK

"I deliver a part of safeguarding training to staff across Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals and can use some of what I have learned as part of that, particularly the neurological process in a threatening situation to explain what might be perceived as a person's aggression and that it might actually be an indication of vulnerability that may never be identified if services refuse to continue to try to engage with them."

PARTICIPANT ON WALSALL VET COURSE

Building partnership working - Romania

“From this training the main message for me and for all the participants is that we need more focused prevention and that the key factor is creating a network of support persons all speaking the same language. If everybody in this network takes a 5 day starter course on EUGANGS, we will all address the same reality with the same intervention patterns and know to lean on each other.”

CPIP TRAINER

Making links with theory – Italian dissertation

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM – UNIVERSITA' DI BOLOGNA

SCUOLA DI PSICOLOGIA E SCIENZE DELLA
FORMAZIONE

Corso di Studio in EDUCATORE SOCIALE E CULTURALE

**EUGANGS:
UN PROGETTO DI FORMAZIONE EUROPEO PER
GESTIRE E RIDURRE IL FENOMENO DELLE
GANG GIOVANILI**

Prova Finale in: Tecnologie della conoscenza

Relatore

Prof. Luigi Guerra

Presentata da

Agnese Donati

Correlatori

Prof. Alessandro Soriani

Prof. Andrea Ascari

I Sessione

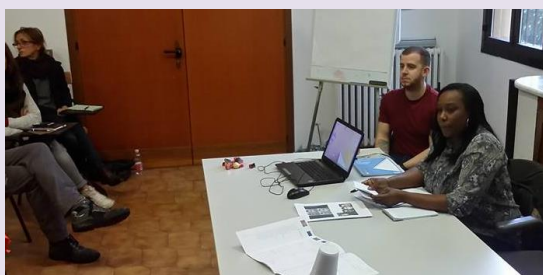
Anno Accademico 2015/2016

Forging Transeuropean links

Through a mobility programme, trainers and participants in the UK had the opportunity to engage in training in Hungary, and deliver training and take part on work placements in Modena.

“The training allowed the trainees to be able to consider the process of socialisation .We looked at the social contexts, factors and forces that have a bearing on young people’s behaviour in the UK, China and Hungary.”

UCB TRAINER



Beyond EUGANGS

As the EUGANGS project comes to a close, its legacy continues through a range of activities.

CPIP have ensured sustainability for EUGANGS in Romania through full state accreditation. This has been recognised by both ministry of labour and ministry of education, under the Community Development Specialist qualification, EQF level 6. In addition, CPIP, along with a Portuguese partner, is leading a successor Erasmus+ [Framegang](#) project, defining the competencies for community professionals working in gang environments.

In the UK accreditation has been secured through the new Open College Network [Level 3 Certificate in Working with Gangs and Youth Violence](#). The VET programme itself is now being offered by project partners UCB and Walsall College. Other centres in the UK have received or are seeking approval to deliver the qualification, including [Sandwell Women's Aid](#), [Ryan Education](#), [South and City College Birmingham](#), [Nacro](#), [Catch 22](#) and [Fircroft College](#).

Action have received approval to deliver the Level 3 Certificate, creating a transnational blended learning model of delivery in collaboration with other partners on the project.

The Open College Network L3 will also form the core of the Walsall Active Citizens programme, supporting participants to deliver local solutions to youth crime in their area.

A particular success has been the establishment of a Community of Practice, based at UCB and open to trainers on the programme. Members of the community have planned and delivered training days, and mobilised action to tackle misrepresentation of young people and 'gangs' in the media.

UCB and CEIS, in collaboration with the University of Modena and Reggio, have also developed a common module for the management of social-health services Masters programme, based on their EUGANGS collaboration, and begun joint seminars via video link.





Further information

More information and resources are available on the EUGANGS website: www.eugangs.eu

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